STALKE
GALLERI
STALKE OUT OF SPACE

William Anastasi

Prints 1988 - 2015

Stalke Galleri Archive

William Anastasi's print production in Denmark constitutes a sustained and significant body of work within his artistic practice. Since 1988, more than 115 editions have been produced in collaboration with Danish print workshops, primarily Niels Borch Jensen Editions and Edition Copenhagen.

The collaboration began in 1988, when Anastasi was invited to Denmark by Sam Jedig of Stalke Galleri to produce lithographs for a mid-career exhibition. This marked the beginning of a long-term working relationship between the artist, the gallery, and the printmakers—one that extended over more than three decades.

Although printmaking was not central to Anastasi's early practice, his engagement in Denmark resulted in a substantial and diverse graphic output. The works range from intaglio prints and lithographs to text-based compositions and body-related conceptual series. Many of the prints develop themes present in Anastasi's earlier performances, installations, and "blind drawings," while exploring the material and procedural conditions specific to print media.

The majority of the works included here are intaglio prints produced in collaboration with Niels Borch Jensen Editions. A distinct group of lithographs produced at Edition Copenhagen is presented separately.

This document provides a structured overview of graphic works produced in Denmark between 1988 and 2015. Detailed edition information is organized by series in the following sections.

Most of the print works shown here are intaglio prints produced in collaboration with Niels Borch Jensen Editions. A separate group of lithographs was produced at Edition Copenhagen and is presented here as its own category.

Blind Drawing

Documentary Works

Self-Portraits

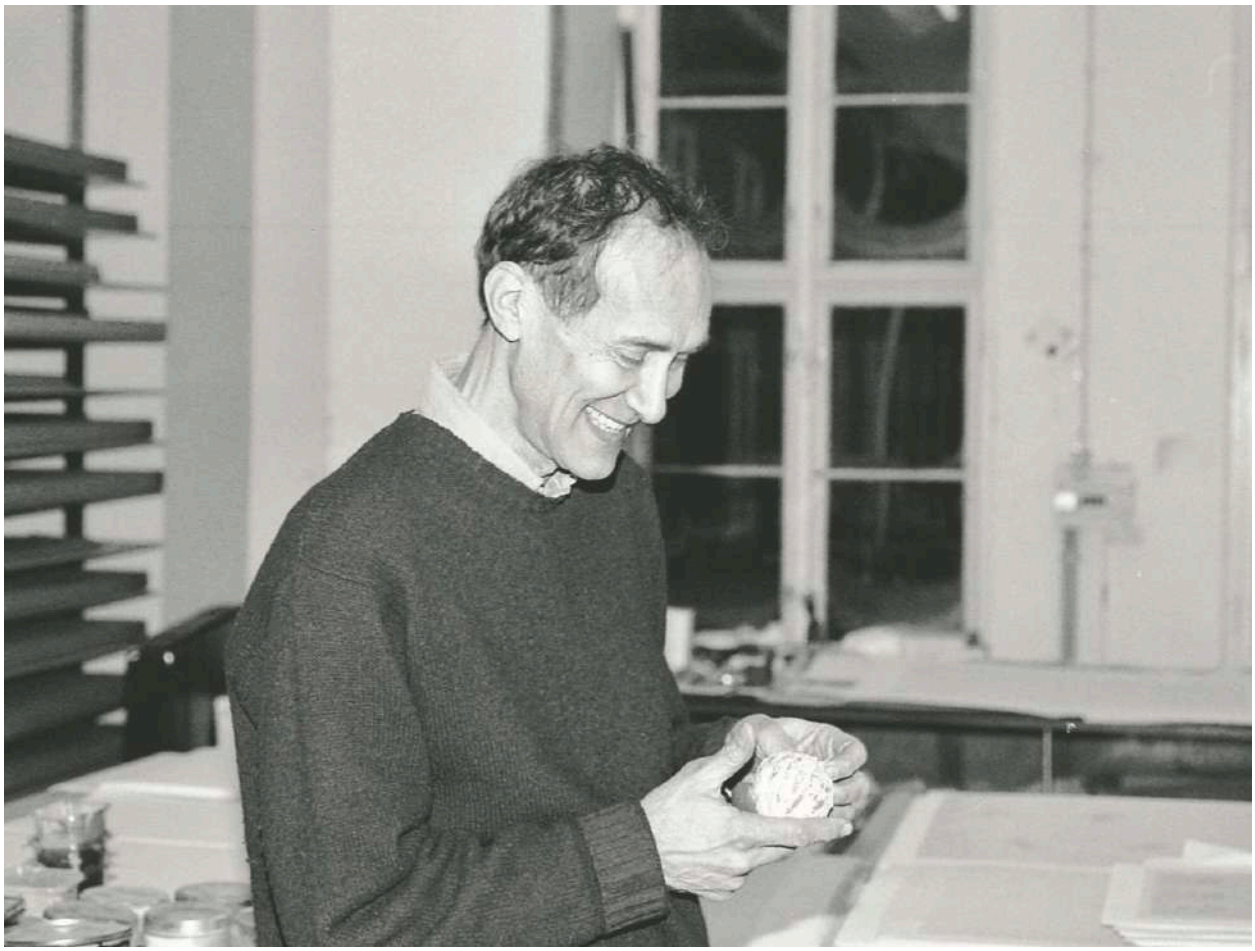
Text-Based Works

JEW Series

Hungry Ghost and Donald Duck

Body-Based Works

Lithographs



WILLIAM ANASTASI AT NIELS BORCH JENSEN STUDIO, 2000

PERFECT / BON À TIRER

By Charles Stuckey

Presenting a mid-career exhibition of works by William Anastasi at his Stalke Galler in 1988, the dealer Sam Jedig invited the visiting artist to make lithographs with Edition Copenhagen. Until Jedig no one had ever considered Anastasi's art in connection with printmaking, never mind how the pioneering conceptual artist had always worked variously in multiple mediums, including photography, sound and language, in addition to drawing, painting and sculpture. Ten years later, when Anastasi returned for another exhibition at Stalke, Jedig introduced him to the master printmaker Niels Borch Jensen, instigating a fruitful partnership that has so far resulted in nearly a hundred beautiful aquatints, photogravures and lithographs, some of them featuring his earliest ideas and installation projects realized in the 1960s. Taken together in this exquisite survey, Jensen's prints both in terms of their scope and sophistication provide a graphically and conceptually rich account of one of New York's most accomplished, uncompromising and reclusive visual artists. Anastasi's deeply personal involvement with these particular works has been documented from the start by Jedig's photographs of the artist at work, a few of them published here to provide immediate context. Anastasi discussed his printmaking at length with his most astute champion, Thomas McEvilley. McEvilley was unable to travel to Copenhagen in 1998 when Jedig exhibited many of these works at the Stalke GallerI immediately upon their completion, but he published a review of the event the same year having seen Anastasi's share in New York. Like Jedig's photographs, McEvilley's somewhat overlooked text documents the concentration and excitement with which Anastasi committed himself to printmaking with Jensen. We are delighted to have this important text available again in this catalogue.

I met William Anastasi along with his then partner, now wife, artist Dove Bradshaw in 1987 during a symposium presented by the Philadelphia Museum of Art to celebrate the one hundredth birthday of Marcel Duchamp, an artist venerated by all three of us – friends ever since. (By some fortunate accident I found an apartment across the street from theirs when I moved back to the city in 2012.) Philadelphia was home to Anastasi until he settled in New York as an aspiring self-taught artist, nearly thirty years old, in 1962. His awareness of modern visual art was grounded in the Arensberg Collection at the Philadelphia Museum with its emphasis on the works of Duchamp – many of Anastasi's incorporating found objects as themselves or letters and words as meaningful images of sounds. Almost immediately he established a place for himself at the forefront of New York's avant-garde, although increasingly he withdrew from the New York gallery world after 1970.

I first learned about Anastasi's singular historic importance thanks to Virginia Dwan's eloquent recollections and the photographic documentation she compiled during Dwan Gallery exhibitions. In 1984 the Archives of American Art had arranged for me to interview the legendary dealer, whose short-lived New York gallery was the epicenter for Minimalism and Earth Art in the US, on the Conceptual artist in-the-spirit of Duchamp, Anastasi who had four solo exhibitions at the Dwan Gallery in New York from 1966 until it closed in 1970, and participated in two group shows, one of them devoted to language and art. The National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. acquired Dwan's personal collection in 2018, including Anastasi's explosively radical *Issue*, first realized in 1966. The present exhibition includes a photogravure published by Jensen in 1998 that represents this masterpiece when it was first installed.

Thrilled to make their acquaintance, I invited Dove and Bill to stay at my apartment in Chicago, where I then served as the modern art curator at the Art Institute. They were planning a visit to Chicago at the suggestion of Richard Cooper, the most enthusiastic collector of Anastasi's art at the time, aside from his daily chess partner the polymath composer, John Cage. With his characteristic enthusiasm, Cooper wanted to arrange for Anastasi to appear as a guest on various television talk shows to discuss the origin story of his recent painting of the word "Jew" as something essentially negative in terms of the art market, a work conceived to disturb more than to appeal, a work to be seen for the moral mind to ponder. Although Anastasi frequently incorporates images of himself into his intensely personal art, he feels strongly that selfpromotion of any sort is contrary to his role as a serious artist. While he takes satisfaction in recognition that comes from museums and scholars, as a man of convictions Anastasi is wary of the sort of publicity proposed by Cooper.

When they visited Chicago Anastasi was especially excited about a still evolving series of large gestural paintings featuring letters as sound. Somewhat similar in visual terms to Jasper Johns's paintings of words embedded in manic fields of colorful brushwork, for example, *False Start*, 1959, each of Anastasi's large, otherwise altogether abstract paintings undertaken with chance methods contains one or more sequential letters excerpted from the incomprehensible one hundred-character-long parenthetical exclamation like a thunderclap at the very beginning of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, as the bricklayer Finnegan falls from a scaffold to his death. (Anastasi's father was a bricklayer, while summers Bill grew up laying brick on the job.) No less devoted to the sound of this profound text than their friend Cage, Anastasi and Dove were then daily reading excerpts aloud to one another. Indeed, the typeface of the letters included in these paintings, an ongoing series for forty years, is traced from projections of the Viking Press edition of Joyce's text, a copy of which they left as a gift.

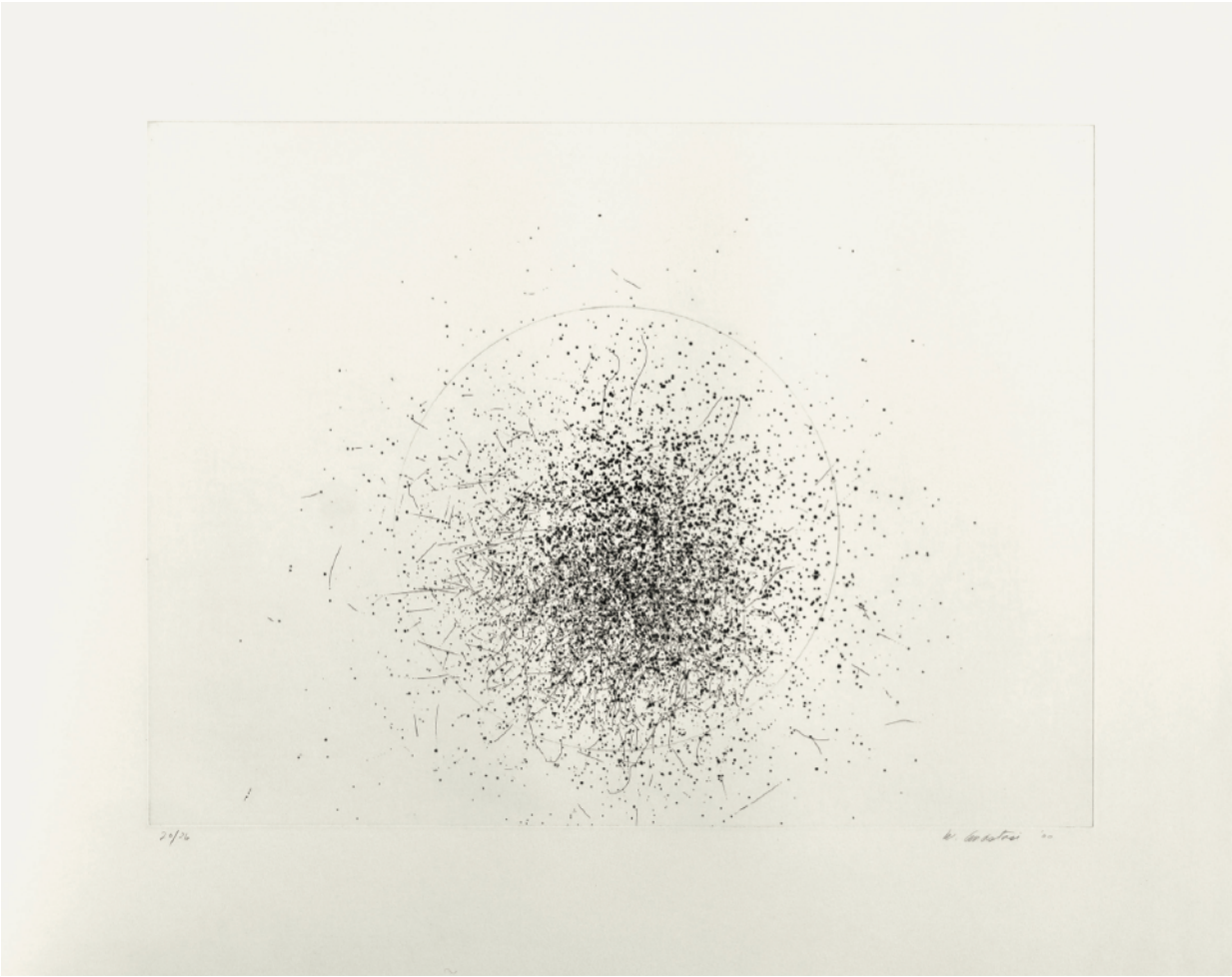
It was only a few months after this visit, during their 1988 trip to Copenhagen that Anastasi made his first lithographs, including images of the word "Jew" as well as images of the first few letters from Joyce's lengthy onomatopoeia, Bababad, as Anastasi calls the series for short. All three of the Bababad lithographs feature urgently energetic, if incoherent, "unsighted" scrawls, black and blue, yellow or red, here overlaid and interlaced with at most four and a half consecutive projected letters, each outlined in various colors. The graphic noise of his freehand scribbles visualizes an unbalanced harmony with the sounds represented by the carefully traced letters.

Welcoming Jedig's introduction to Jensen in 1998 during a second visit to Copenhagen (and then again in 2005 and 2013), Anastasi embarked on a fuller range of printmaking techniques to fulfill and expand his idiosyncratic graphic concepts. Indeed, as McEvilley at once realized, the first twenty-eight intaglio prints that Anastasi made with Jensen, in a mere five days, amounted to something like a retrospective overview of his entire oeuvre up until that date. In this selection he reconfigured some of his favorite works on copper plates, sometimes in freehand, as if making a drawing, sometimes providing documentary photographs of ephemeral pieces for Jensen to refresh as rich photogravures. McEvilley devoted particular attention to the group of five aquatints devoted to the word "perfect," a word art idea first realized as a drawing around 1976 (unlocated, without photographic documentation): "These also gain new meaning through the fact that they are rendered in aquatint, posing a self-referentiality the more ironic for the imperfection of the medium – the mind reeling in the chaotic wilderness of little scratches." Such irony between the word and the five varied images conforms to the spirit of Magritte's influential word paintings, such as *The Treachery of Images*, 1929, with these words, "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" next to an image of a pipe rather than a real pipe. Moreover, Anastasi recently explained to me that as a word "perfect" can be used as an adjective to indicate that nothing could be better; or as a verb to indicate an attempt to improve something in some way less than perfect. Although the image of the word "perfect" is resoundingly literal, its meaning could hardly be more abstract as Anastasi hints at the paradox. To my surprise, Bill was unable to recall precisely why the word "perfect" came to fascinate him in 1976; nor why twenty-two years later the theme again had special interest, enough so that he devoted five of his first intaglio prints to it. He mentioned how perfection was at issue in his many works that involve

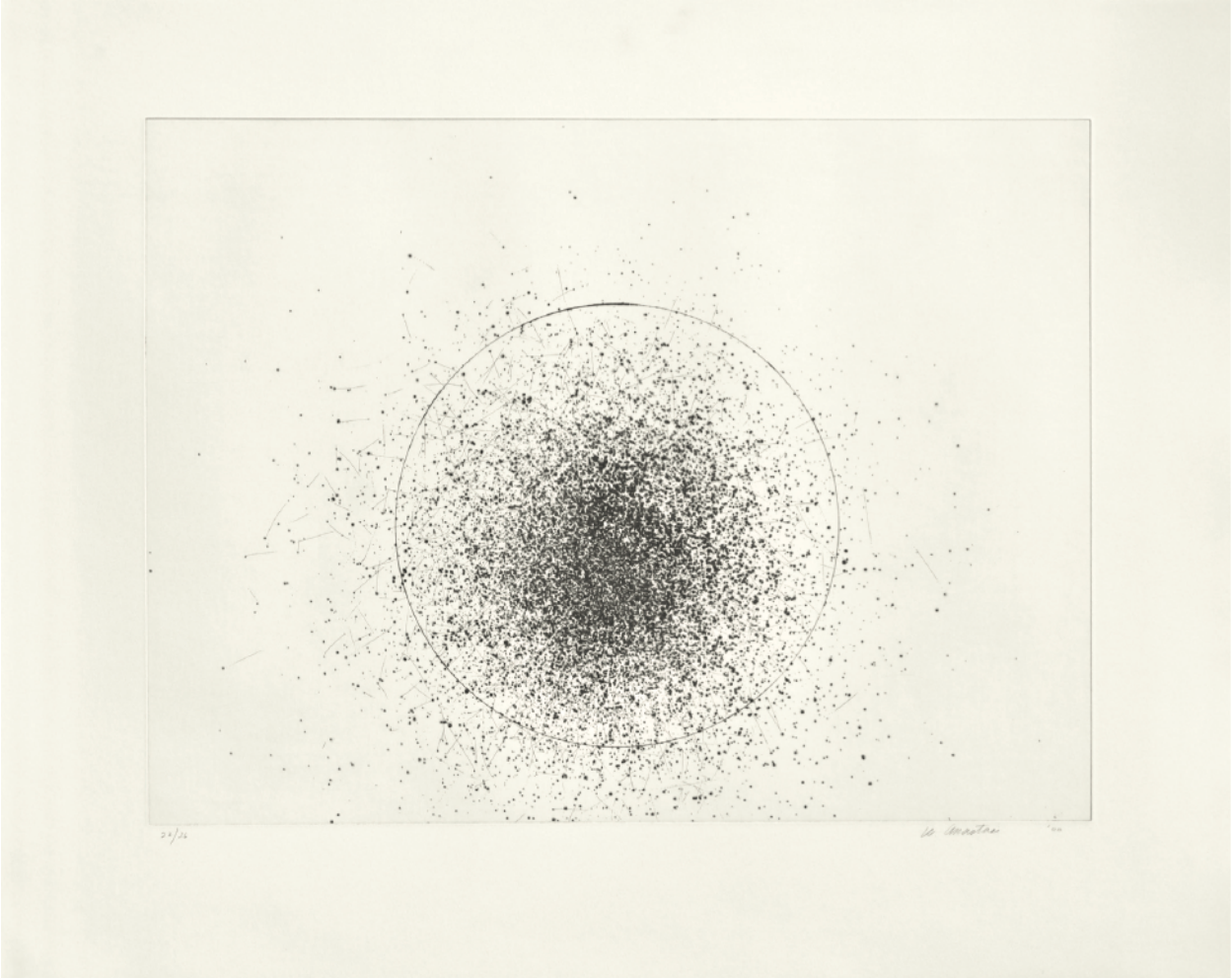
replicas, so that, for example, the six full-scale photographic images of the Dwan Gallery walls that he installed on the very walls they represented in his now historic *Six Sites May 1967* exhibition at the Dwan Gallery fit perfectly between art and life, the blank gallery space providing the ideal opportunity to fill a void by recognizing it for what it is. Indeed, another of the 1998 photogravures printed by Jensen documents the six giant photographs installed on its corresponding wall, looking as if there is nothing to it. Of course, such interrelationships between the images in his art and their sites have been a constant in Anastasi's art over the decades. Even so, connections between such concepts and the word "perfect" are neither an obvious nor a complete explanation for why the word "perfect" recurs to his imagination. Knowing Bill all these years, of course, I "see" his images of the word "perfect" as proxy portraits of himself as an artist unable to compromise. While to the best of my knowledge no one is or can be anything like perfect, if I am not mistaken, Anastasi has always been an artist to perfection.

WILLIAM ANASTASI AT NIELS BORCH JENSEN, 2000

Blind Drawing



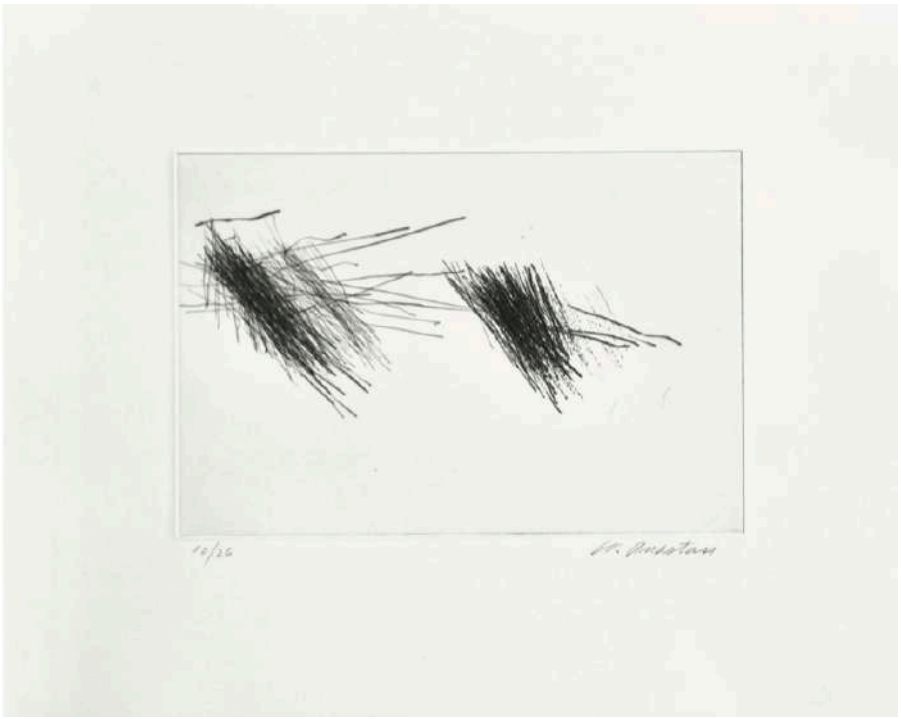
DROP DRAWING, 2000 - Line etching, 77x97 cm, edition 26



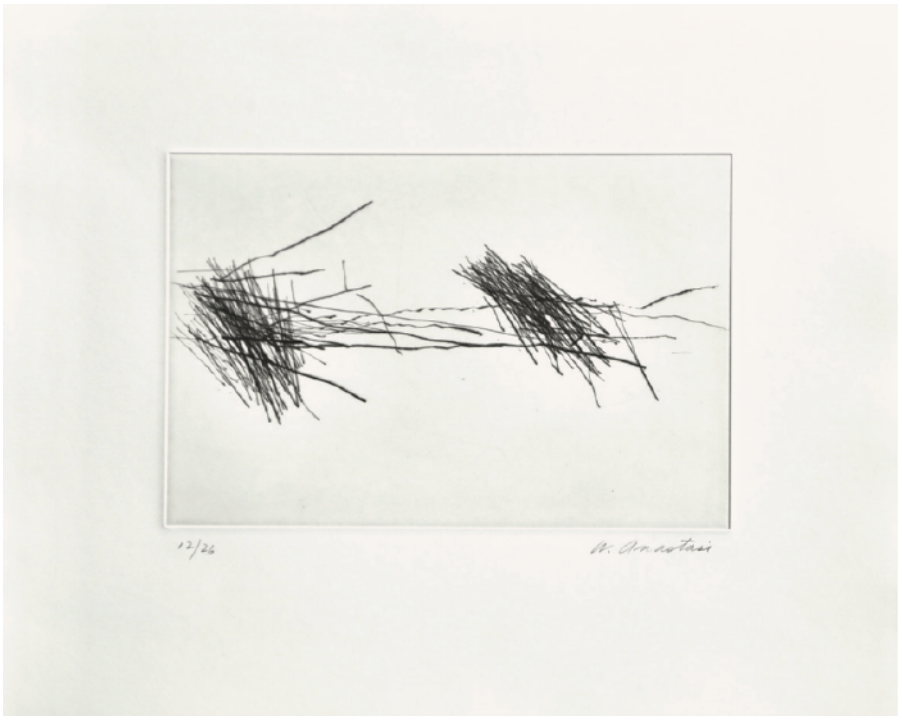
DROP DRAWING, 2000 - Drypoint, 77x97 cm, edition 26

CLOSET DRAWING, 2000 - Drypoint, 97x77 cm, edition 26

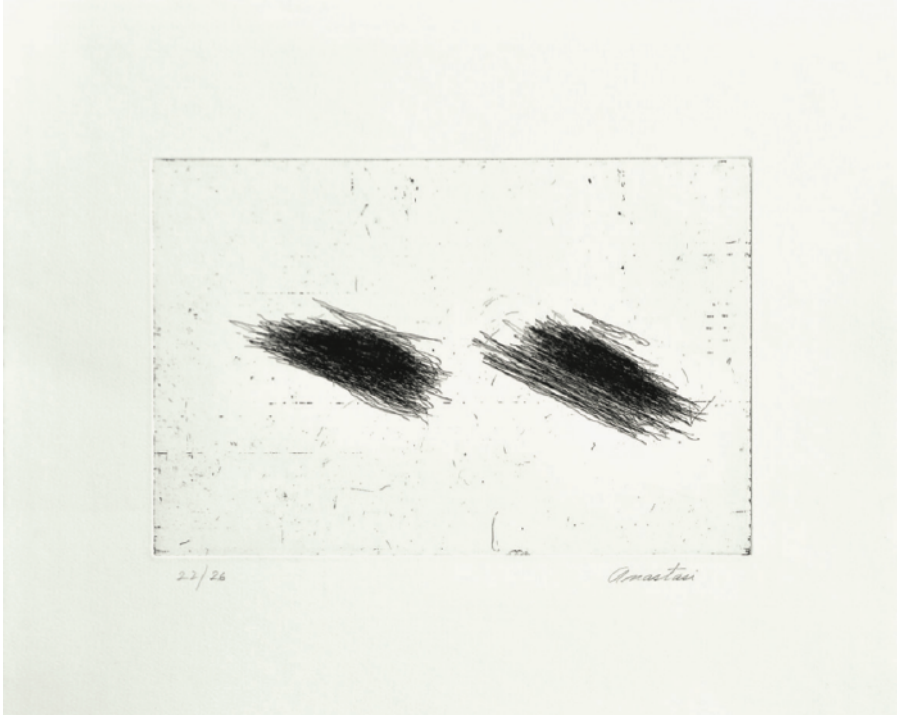
UNTITLED, 2005 - Drypoint, 39x48 cm, edition 26



SUBWAY DRAWING 1-2, 2000 - Drypoint, 39x48 cm, edition 26



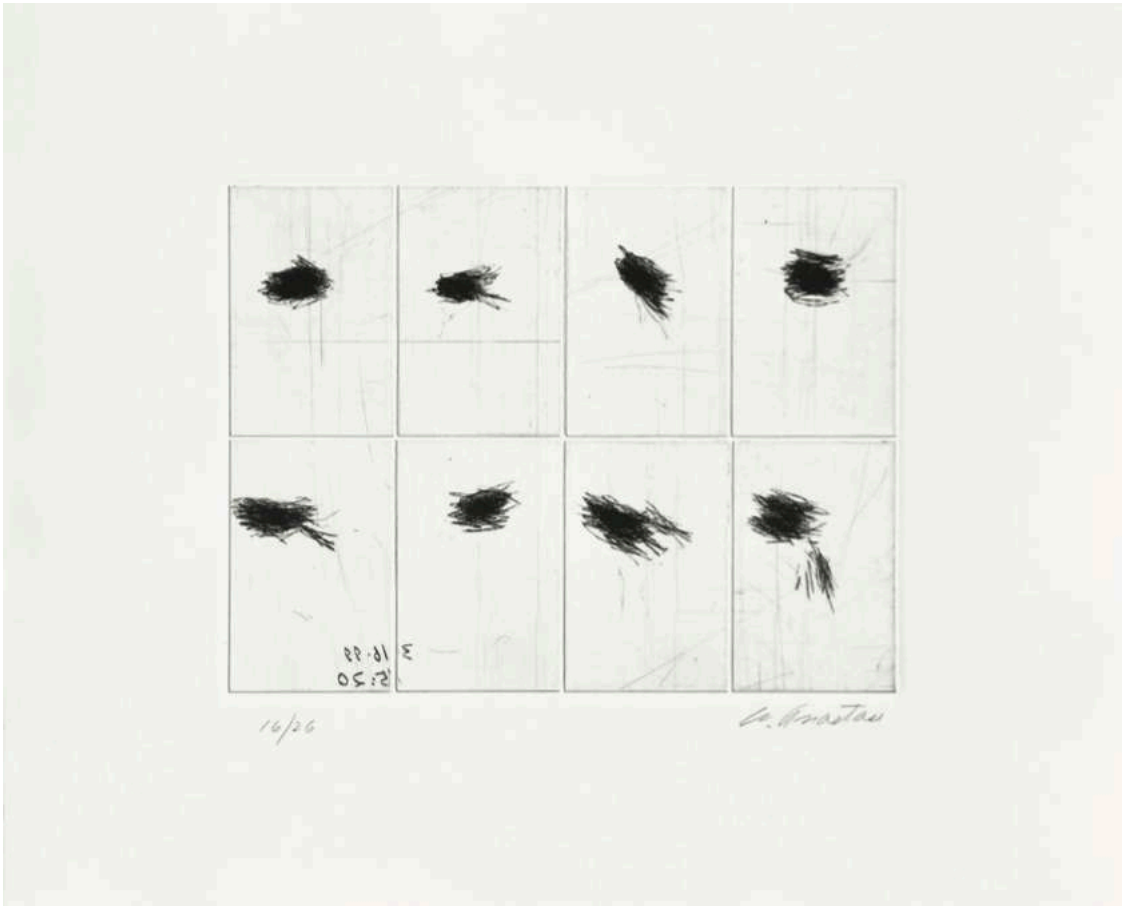
SUBWAY DRAWING 1-2, 2000 - Drypoint, 39x48 cm, edition 26



SUBWAY DRAWING, 1-2, 2005 - Line etching, 39x48 cm, edition 26

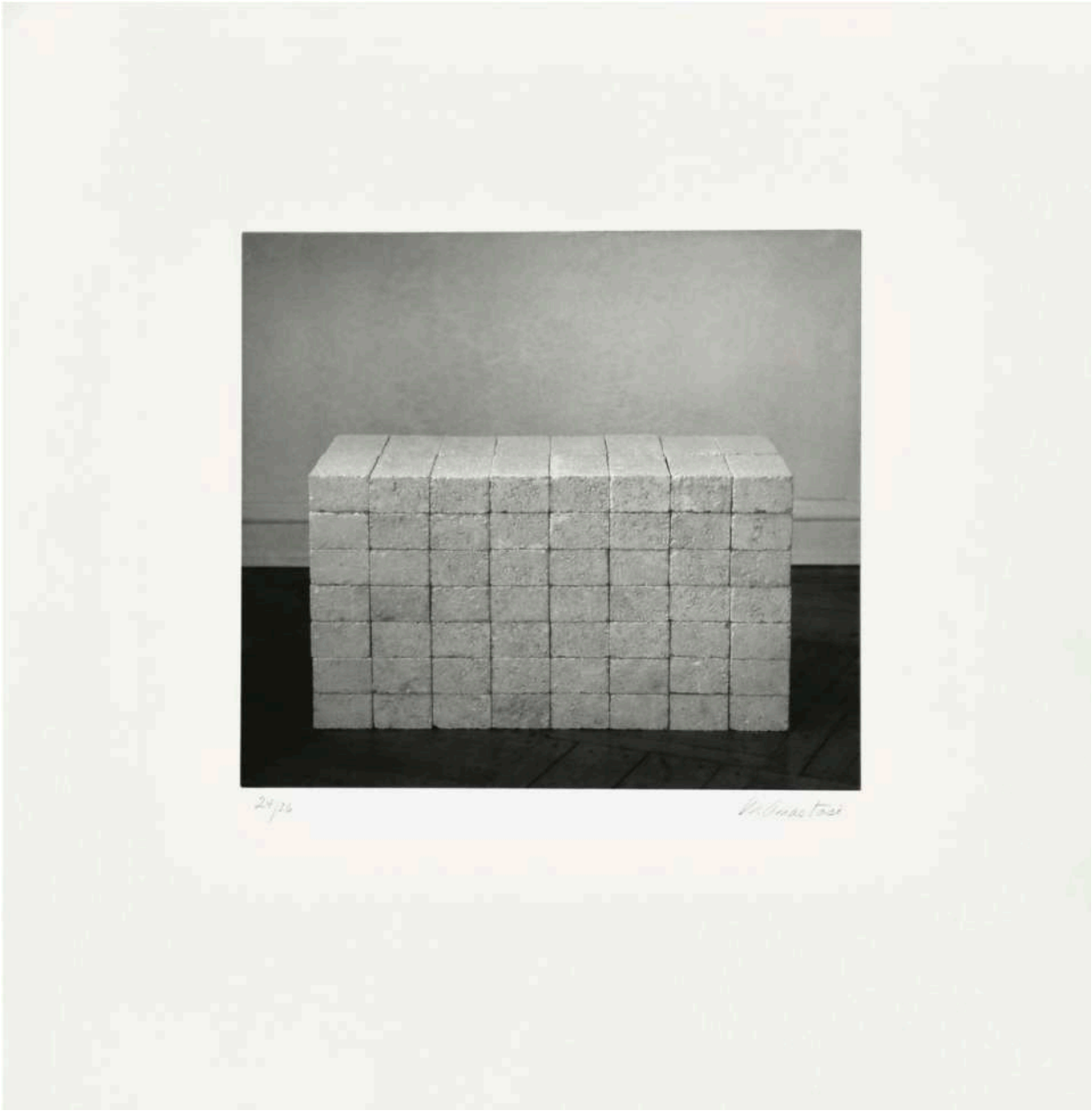
BURST, 2000 - Drypoint, 200x194 cm, edition 9

POCKET DRAWING, 2000 - Drypoint, 39x48 cm, edition 26



POCKET DRAWING, 2000 - Drypoint, 39x48 cm, edition 26

Documentary Works



WITHOUNT TITLE, (EN ROUTE) 1964/2013 - Photogravure, 57x56 cm, edition 26

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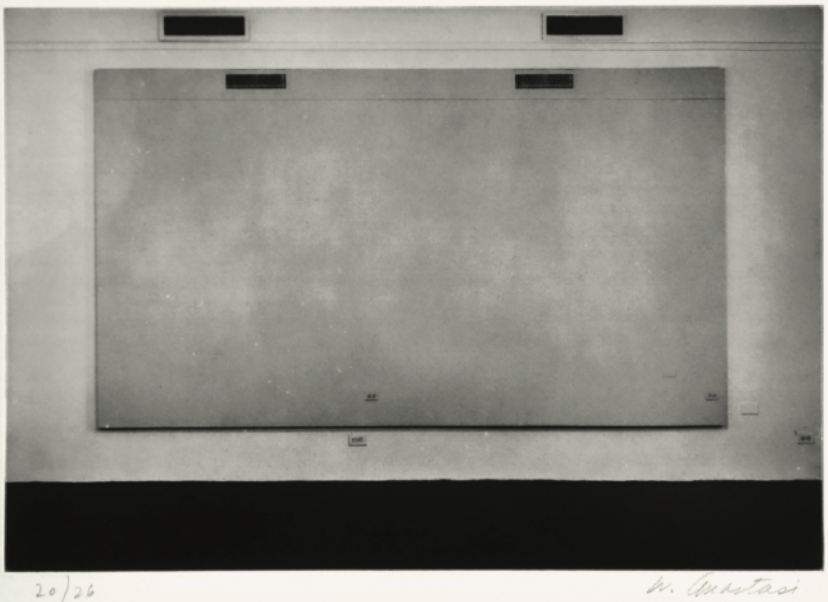
Anastasi

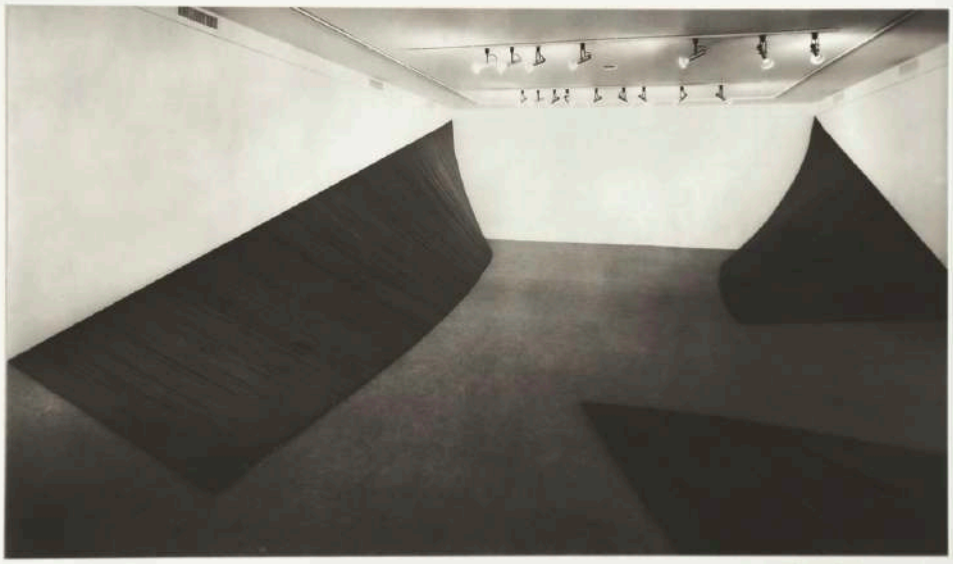
WITHOUT TITLE, 2005 - Photogravure, 56x39 cm, edition 26



20/26

M. Anastasi

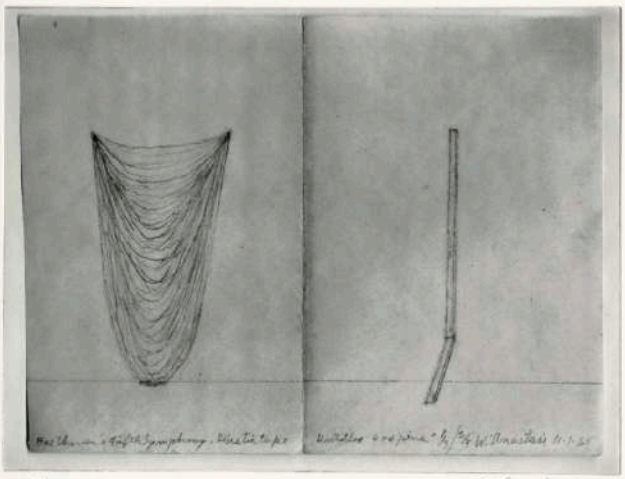
FROM SIX SITES, VIRGINIA DWARN GALLERY, 1967/1998 - Photogravure, 38x48 cm, edition 26



STEEL RODS, (THREE CONIE SECTIONS), VIRGINIA DWARN GALLERY, 1970/2005. - Photogravure, 39x55,5 cm, edition 26

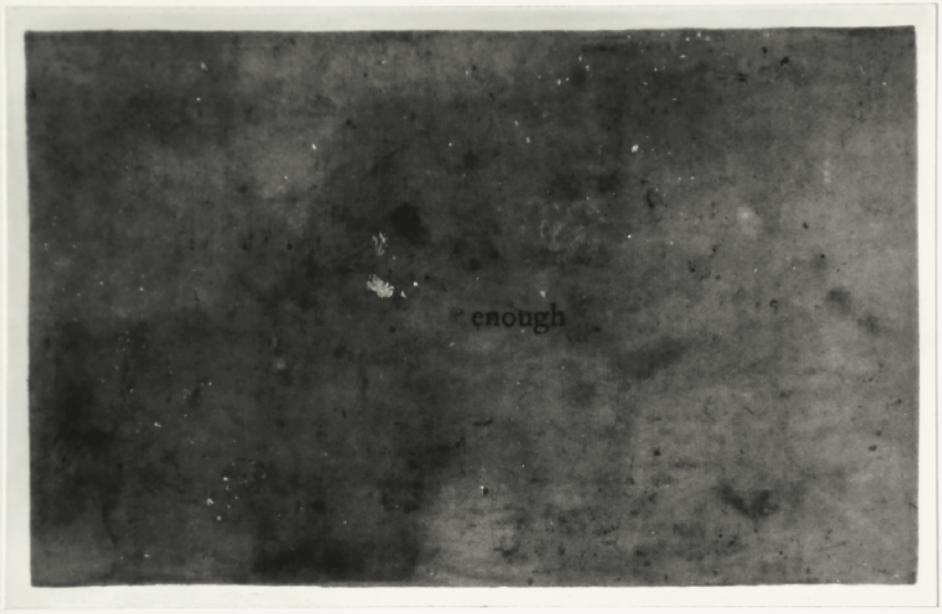
ISSUE,1966/1998 - Photogravures, 48x39 cm, edition 26

WITHOUT TITLE, (PROP PIECE) 1965/1998 - Photogravure, 48x39 cm, edition 26



BEETHOVEN'S FIFTH SYMPHONY AND WITHOUT TITLE, (PROP PIECE), 1965/2013 - Photogravure, 38x56 cm, edition 26

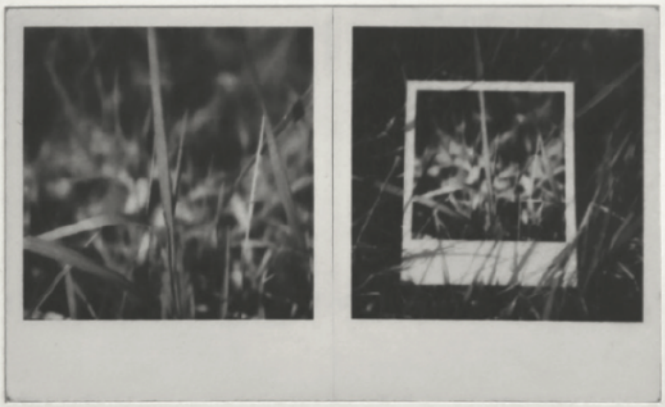
BEETHOVEN'S FIFTH SYMPHONY 1965/1998 - Photogravure, 48x39 cm, edition 26



ENOUGH 1980/89-2000 - Photogravure, 38,5x48 cm, edition 26

NINE POLAROID PHOTOGRAPHS OF A MIRROR,1967/2000 - Photogravure, 48x39 cm, edition 26

DIPTYCH, 1967/2000. - Photogravures, 39x28 cm, edition 26



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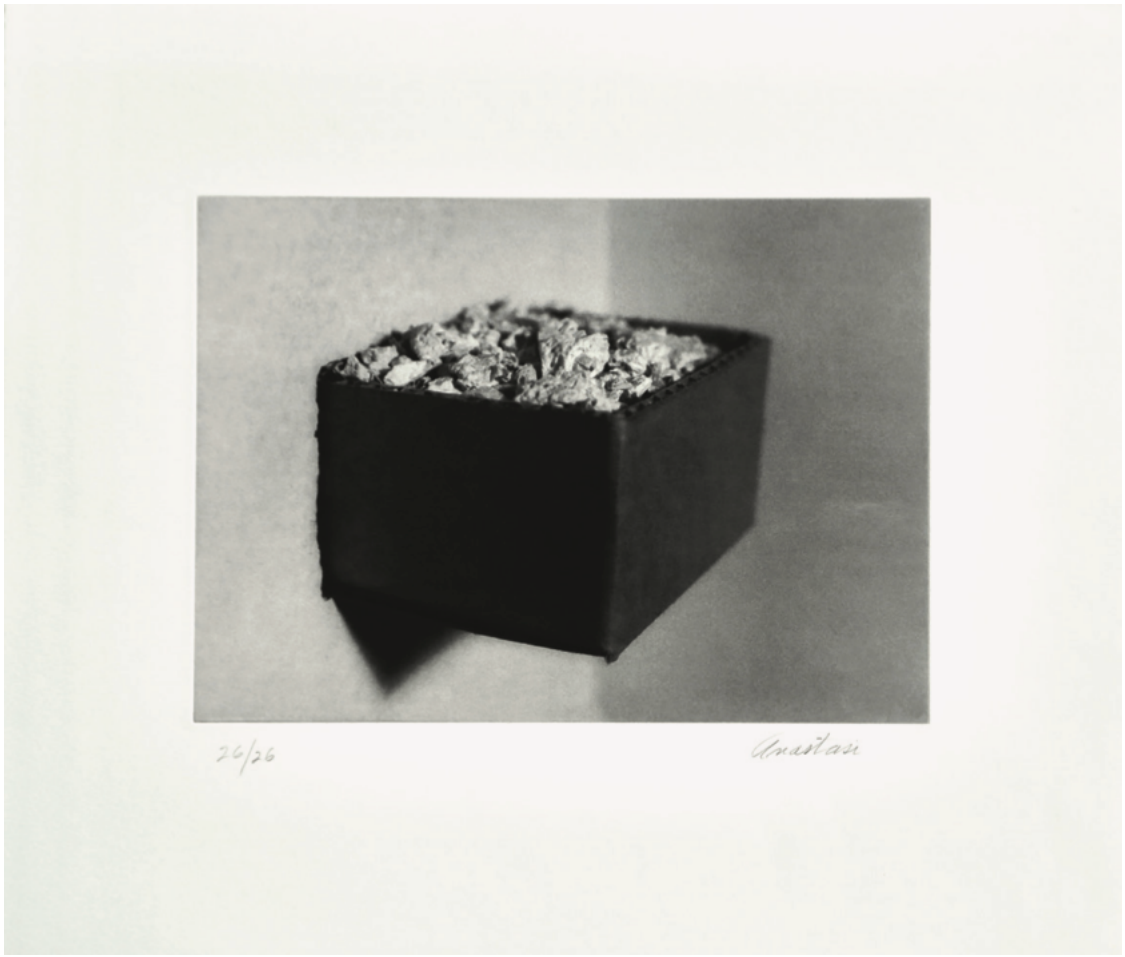
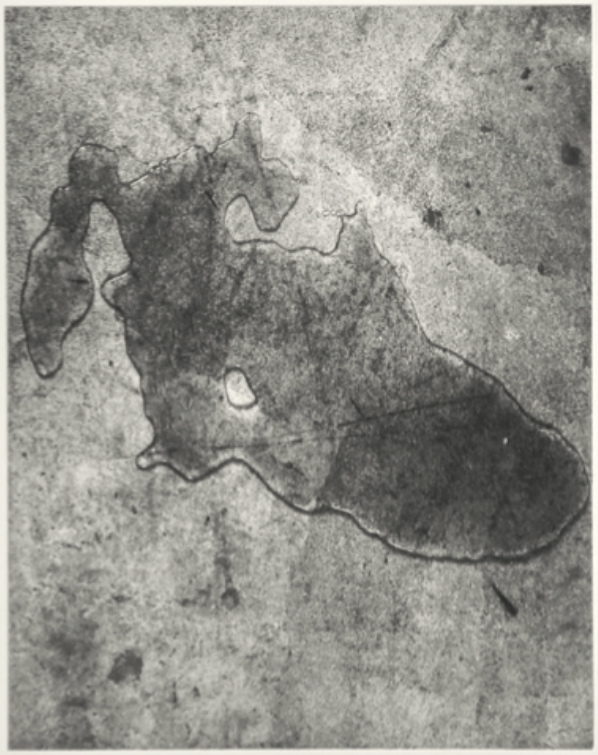
DIPTYCH, 1967/2000. - Photogravures, 39x28 cm, edition 26

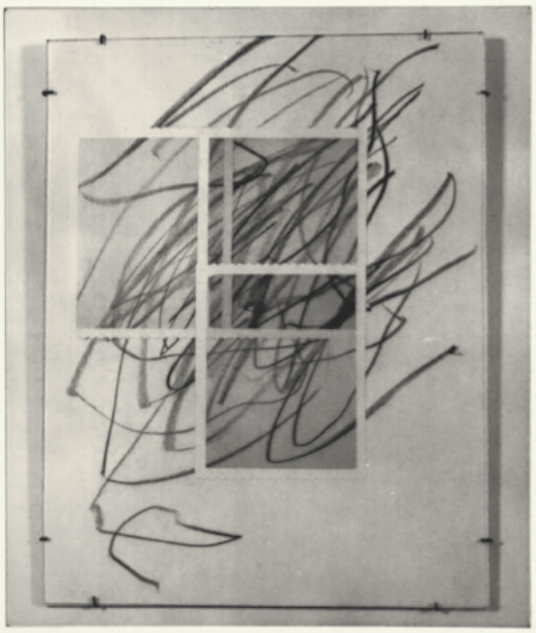


DISPLACED SITE,1967/2005 - Photogravure, 39x44 cm, edition 26



24/26

TWELVE OUNCES OF TAP WATER POURED ON THE FLOOR, 1967/2005 - Photogravure, 49x39 cm, edition 26

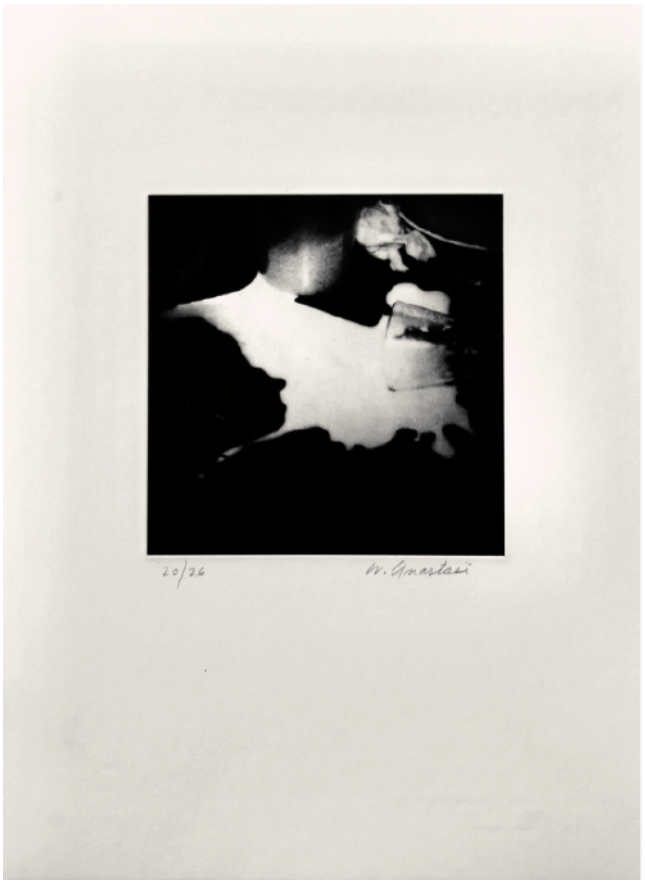


WITHOUT TITLE, THREE POLAROID PHOTOGRAPHS ON A BLIND DRAWING - 1964/1998 - Photogravure, 39x28 cm, edition 26

PASSION (PAPERING) 1967/2005 - Photogravure, 49x39 cm, edition 26

20/26

ACCIDENTS, 1998 - Photogravure, 39x28 cm, edition 26



ACCIDENTS, 1998 - Photogravure, 39x28 cm, edition 26

22/26

22/26

ACCIDENTS, 1998 - Photogravure, 39x28 cm, edition 26

ACCIDENTS, 1998 - Photogravure, 39x28 cm, edition 26

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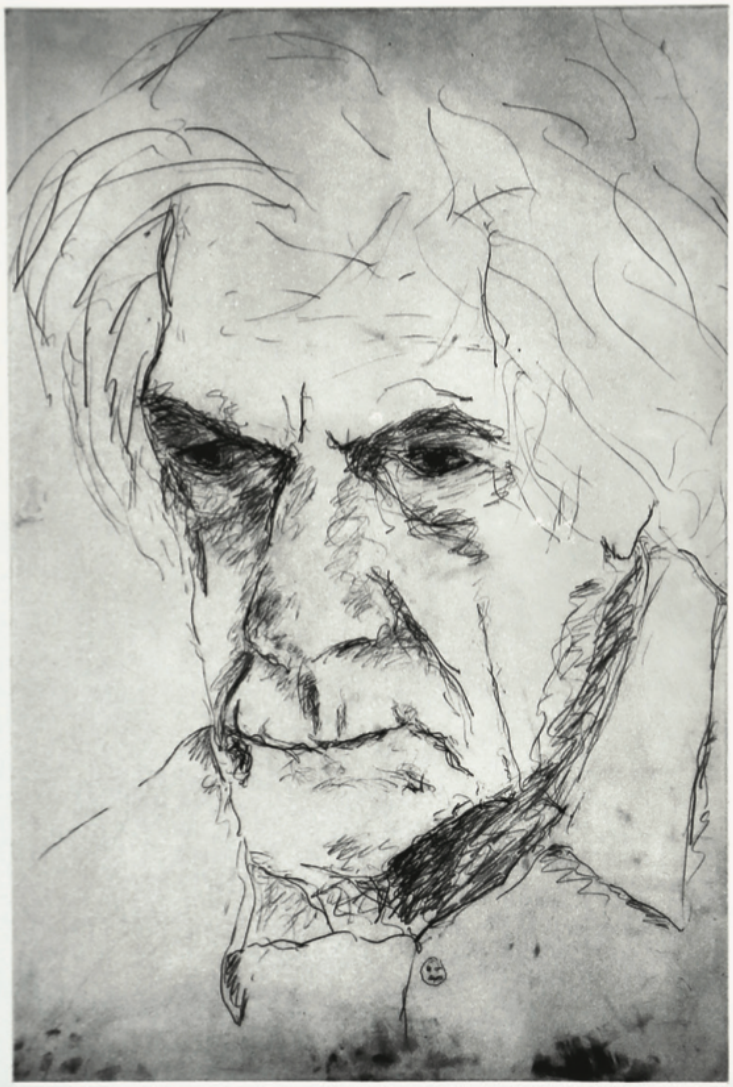
Anastasi

BLIND, 1966/2005 - Photogravure, 57x49 cm, edition 26



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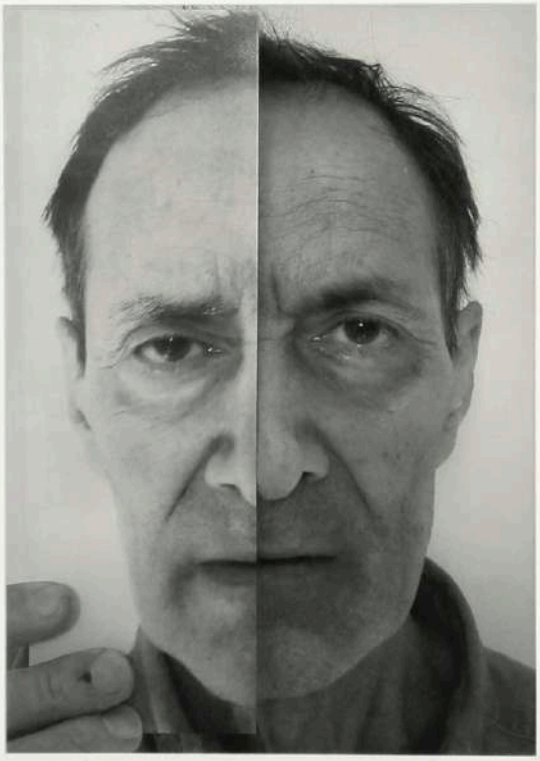
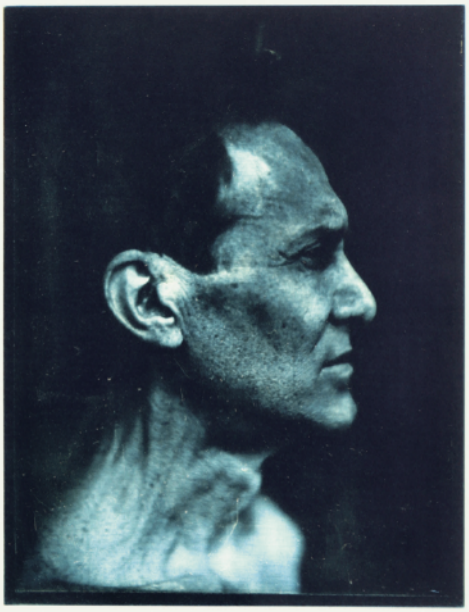
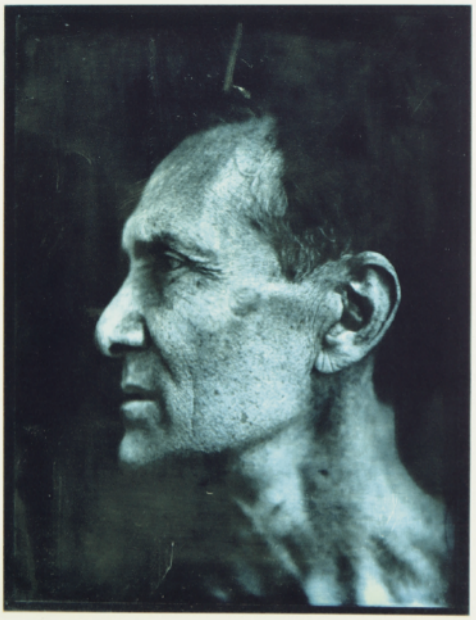
WITHOUT TITLE, (PORTRAIT OF JOHN CAGE), 1986/2013 - Photogravure, 56x39,5 cm, edition 26

Self-Portraits

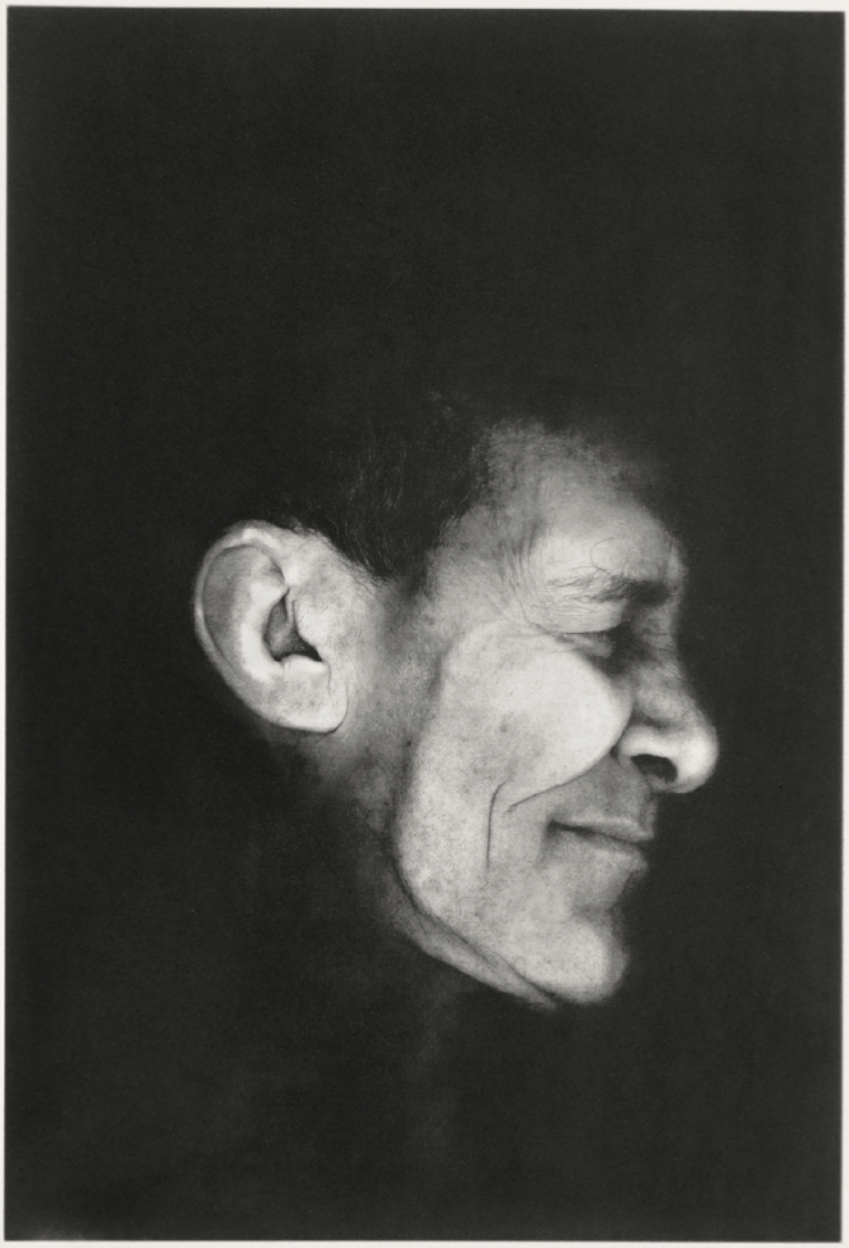


SELFPORTRAIT, 2005 - Photogravure, 58x38 cm, edition 26





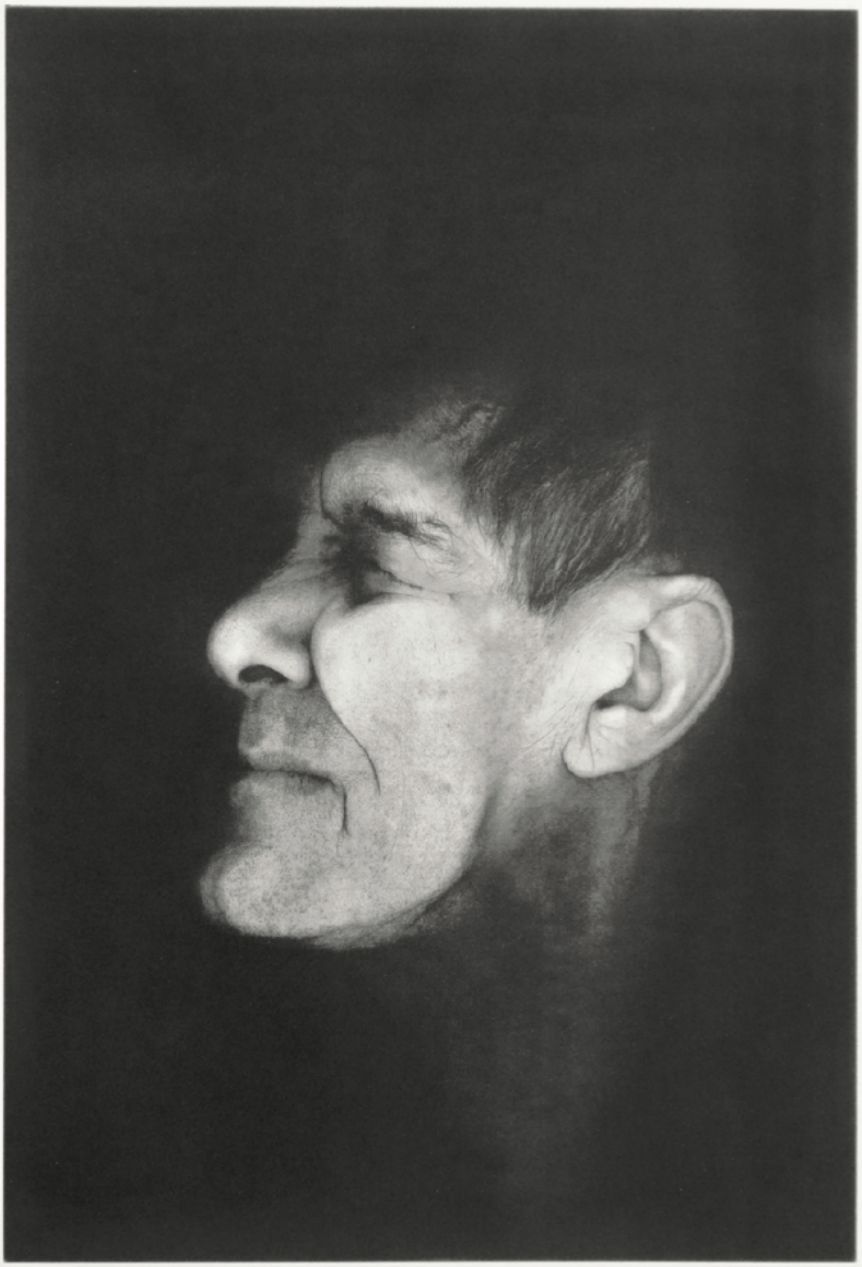
SELFPORTRAIT, 1-2, 2013 - Photogravure, 56x45,5 cm, edition 26



24/26

A. Anastasi

SELFPORTRAIT, 2005 - Photogravure, 56x37 cm, edition 26



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SELFPORTRAIT, 2005 - Photogravure, 56x37 cm, edition 26

MAINTENANCE III, 1968/2000 - Photogravure, 48x39 cm, edition 26

MAINTENANCE II, 1968/2000 - Photogravure, 48x39 cm, edition 26

POCKET DRAWING ON AUTOBODYOGRAPHY 2005- Photogravure 46x78 cm, edition 18

DIPTYCH SELFPORTRAIT, 2000 - Photogravure, 39x52 cm, edition 26

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DIPTYCH SELFPORTRAIT, 2000 - Photogravure 50x50,5 cm, edition 26

Text-Based Works

I DON'T WANT THIS ON MY WALL, 1998 - Photogravure, 39x46 cm, edition 26

I DON’T WANT THIS ON MY WALL, 1998 - Photogravure, 39x46 cm, edition 26

THIS, 1986/1998 - Photogravure, 50x39 cm, edition 26

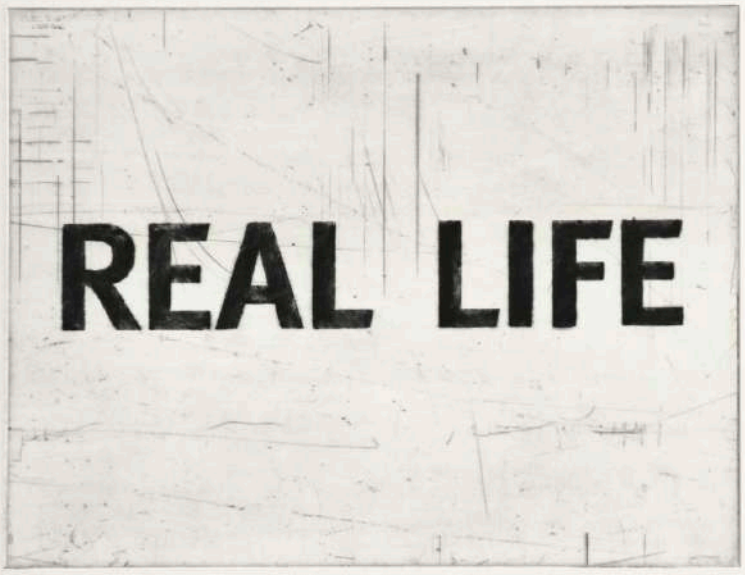
A WORD
words

words
A WORD

PERFECT, 1998 - Spit bite aquatint, 39x48 cm, edition 26

PERFECT, 1998 - Spit bite aquatint, 39x48 cm, edition 26

PERFECT, 1998 - Spit bite aquatint, 39x48 cm, edition 26

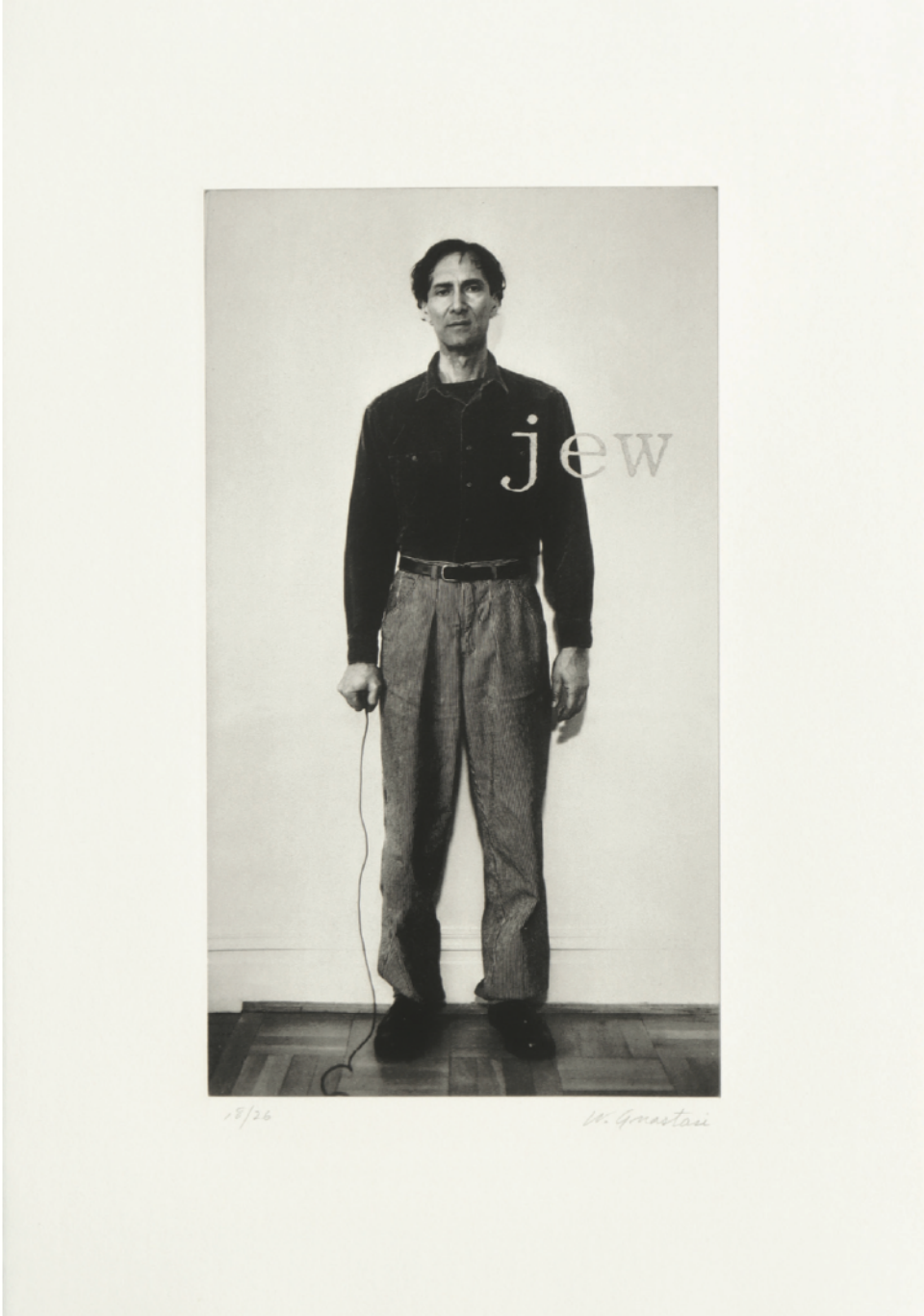


REAL LIFE , 1990 - 2000 - AQIATINT 39x 49 cm edtion 26

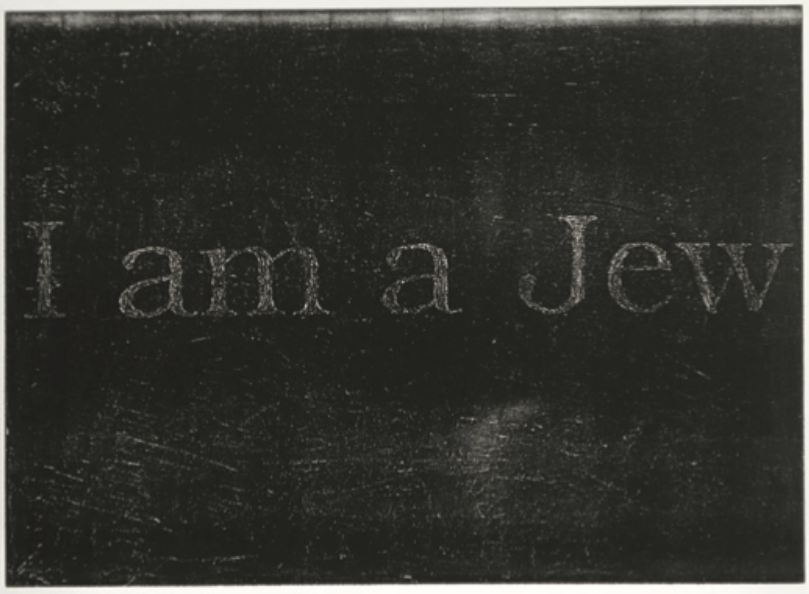
DUCHAMP ON THE JARRY ROAD, 2000 - Photogravure, 39x78 cm, edition 26

JARRY - DUCHAMP, 2000 - Photogravure, 39x78 cm, edition 26

JEW Series



JEW, 1998 - Photogravure/Aquatint, 59x39 cm, edition 26



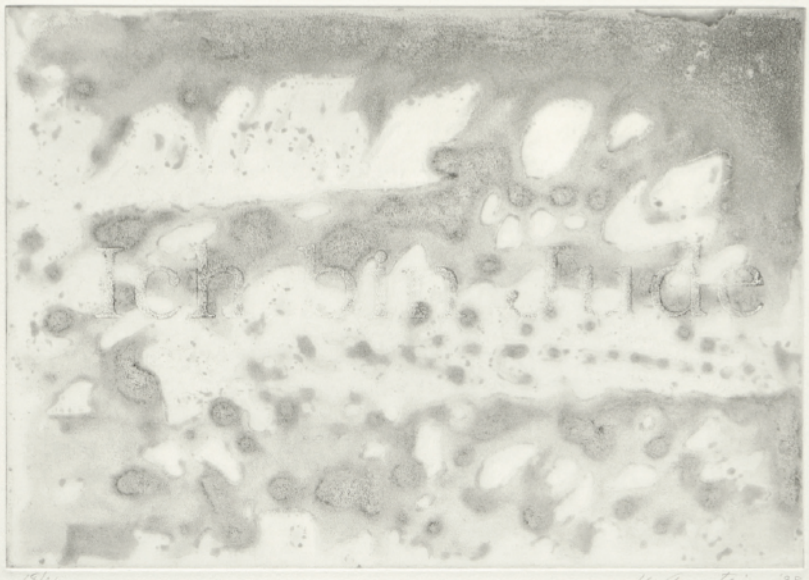
24/30

I AM A JEW, 1998 - Photogravure, 39x46 cm, edition 26

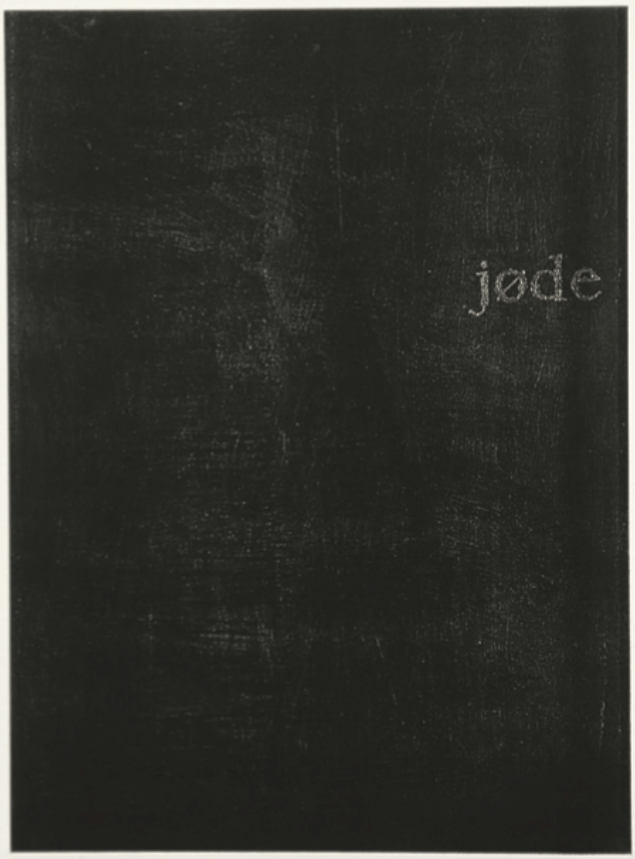
ICH BIN JUDE, 1998 - Photogravure, 39x46 cm, edition 26

JØDE, 1998 - Spit bite aquatint and drypoint, 48x38 cm, edition 26

JEW, 1998 - Spit bite aquatint and drypoint, 48x38 cm, edition 26



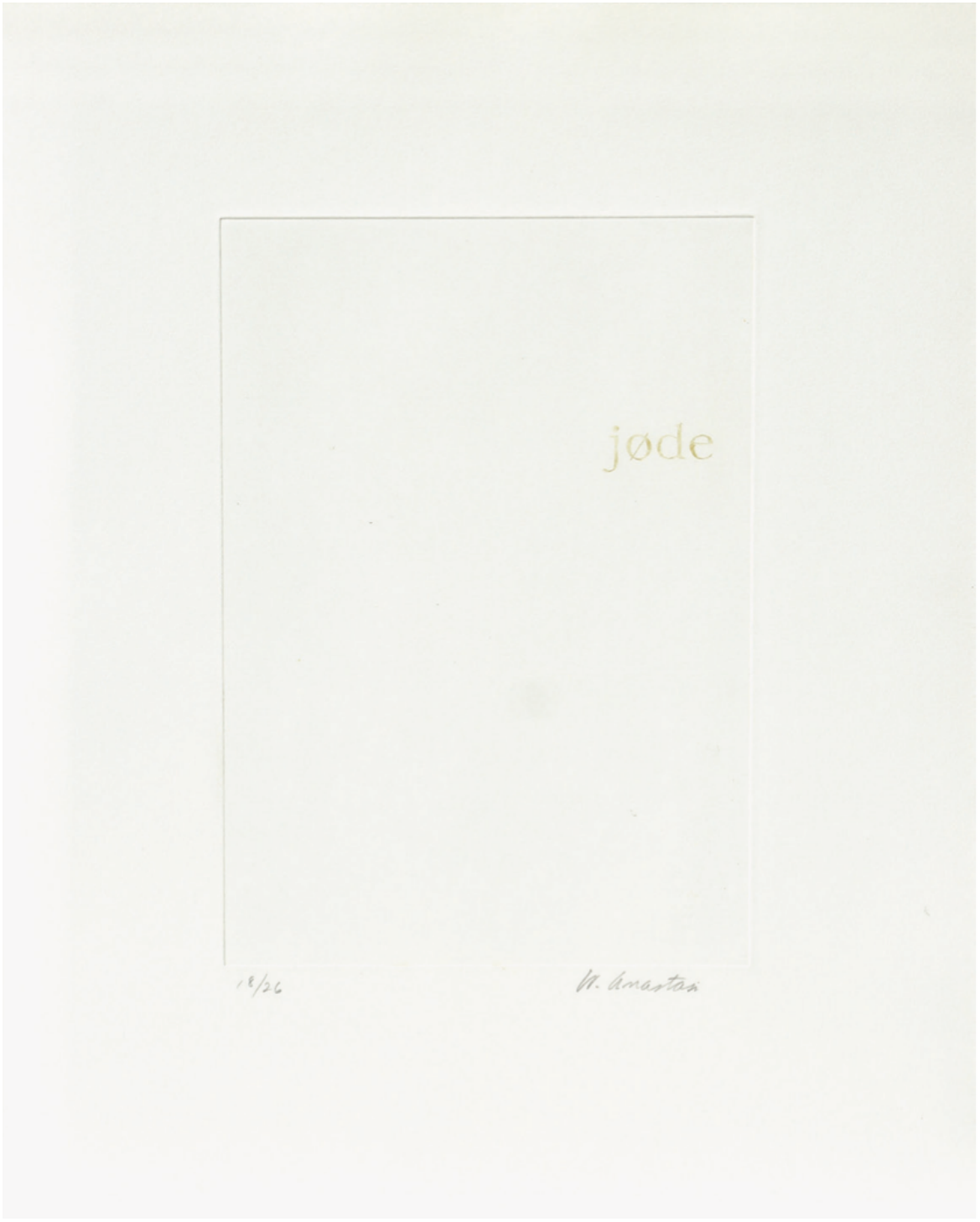
ICH BIN JUDE, 1998 - Spit bite aquatint, 48x38 cm, edition 26



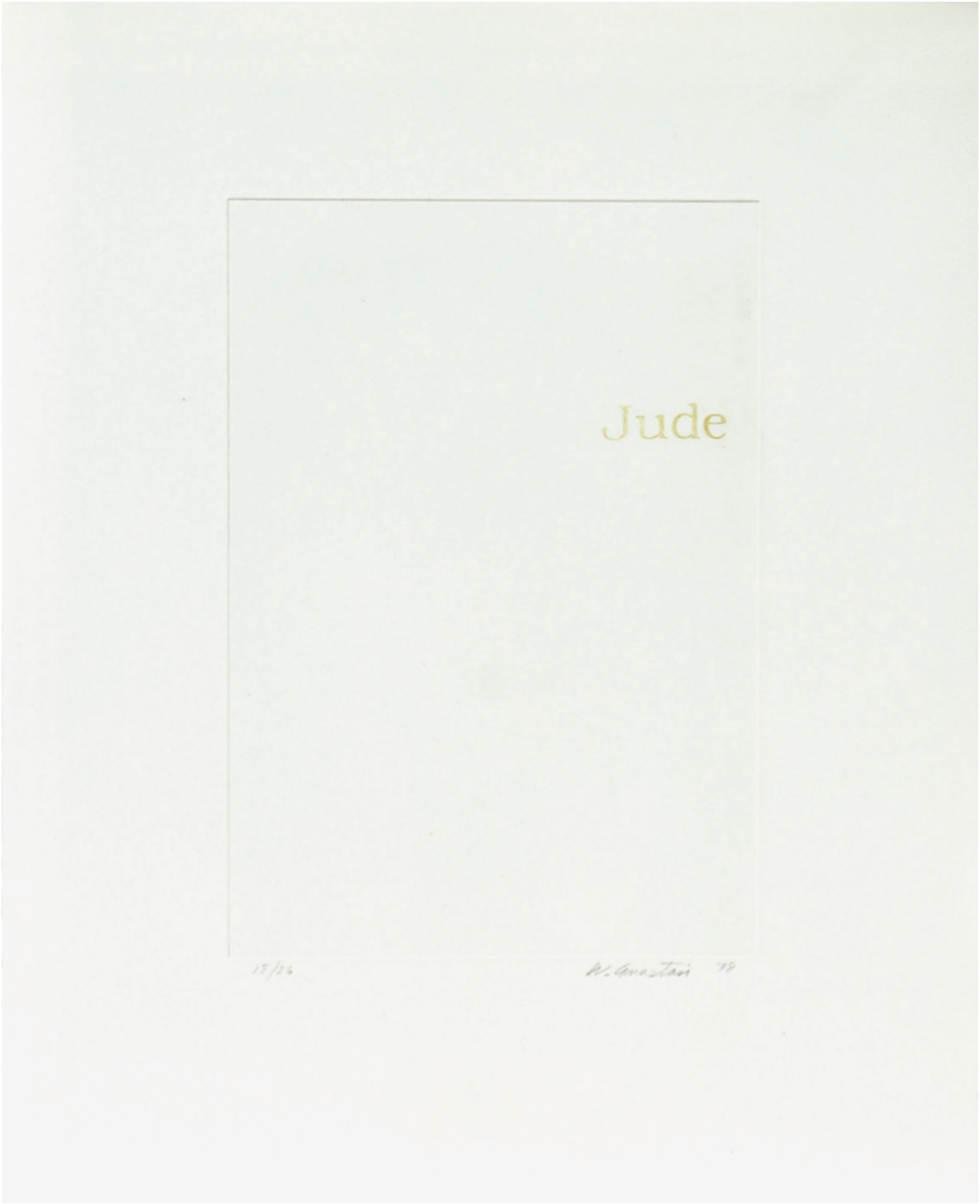
JØDE, 1998 - Photogravure, 48x38 cm, edition 26

JEW, 1998 - Photogravure, 48x38 cm, edition 26

JEW, 1998 - Drypoint, 49x38 cm, edition 26



JØDE, 1998 - Drypoint, 49x38 cm, edition 26



JUDE, 1998 - Drypoint, 49x38 cm, edition 26

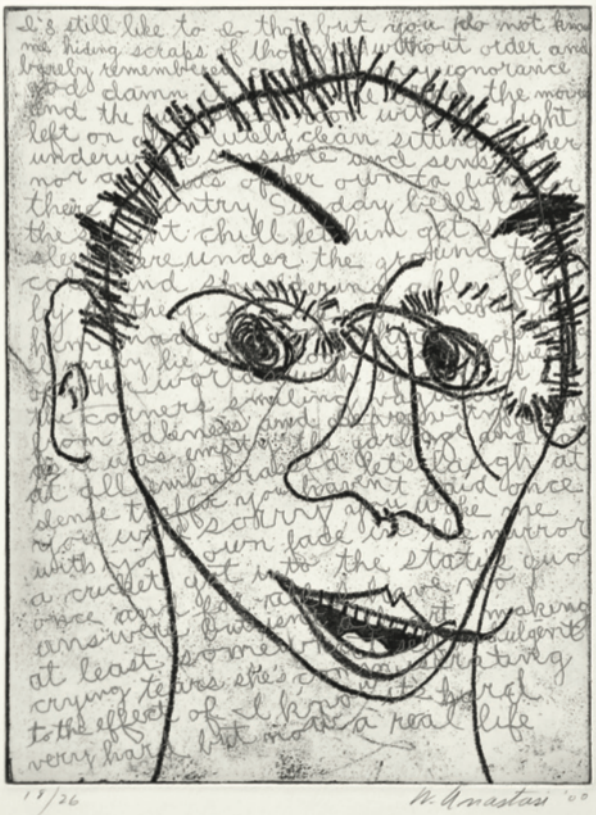
ICH BIN JUDE, 1998 - Spit bite aquatint, 38x48 cm, edition 26

I AM A JEW, 1998 - Spit bite aquatint, 38x48 cm, edition 26

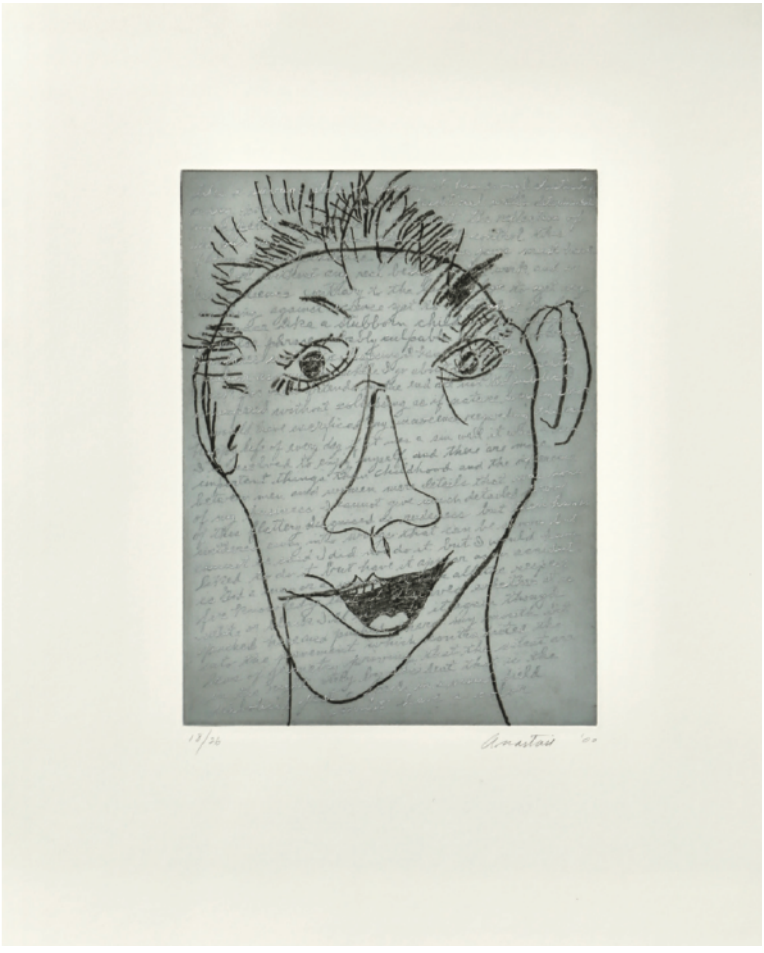
Hungry Ghost and Donald Duck

HUNGRY GHOST 2000 - Soft ground etching, 97x77 cm, edition 26

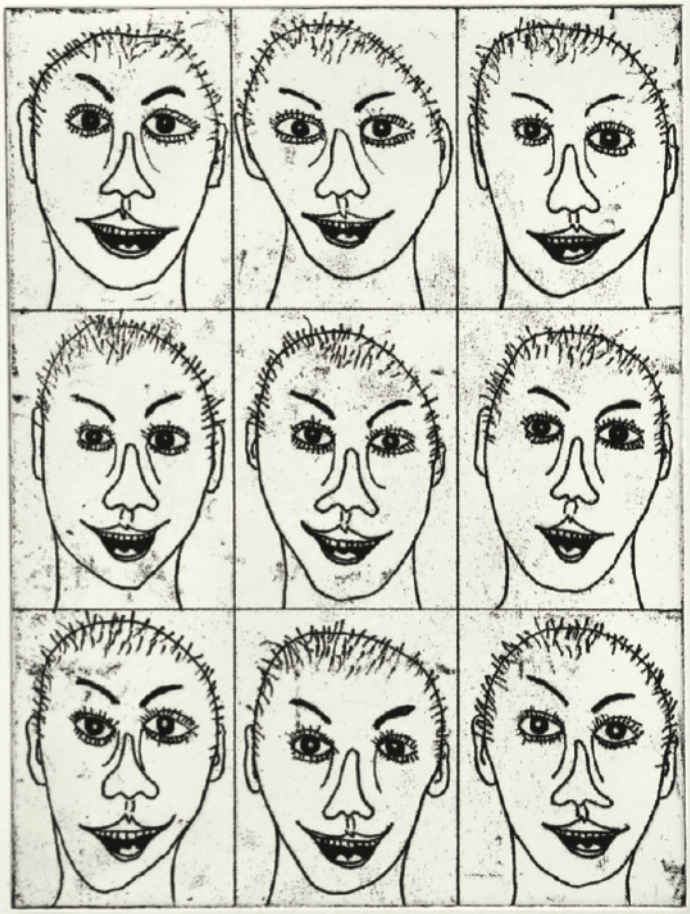
HUNGRY GHOST, 2000 - Soft ground etching, 38x38 cm, edition 26



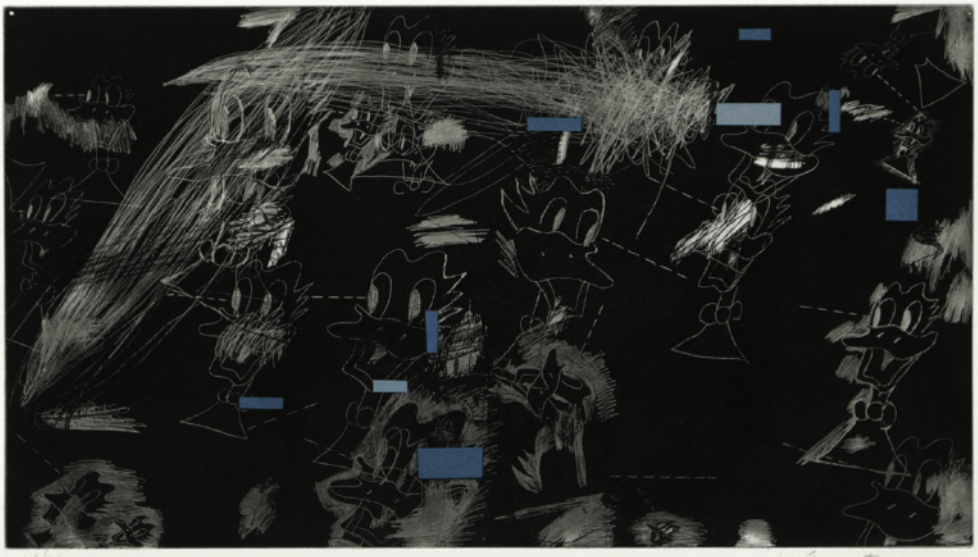
HUNGRY GHOST, 2000 - Soft ground etching, 38x38 cm, edition 26



HUNGRY GHOST, 2000 - Soft ground etching, 38x38 cm, edition 26



HUNGRY GHOST, 2000 - Soft ground etching, 38x38 cm, edition 26



UNTITLED, 1998 - Photogravure, 39x59 cm, edition 26

26/26

W. Anastasi

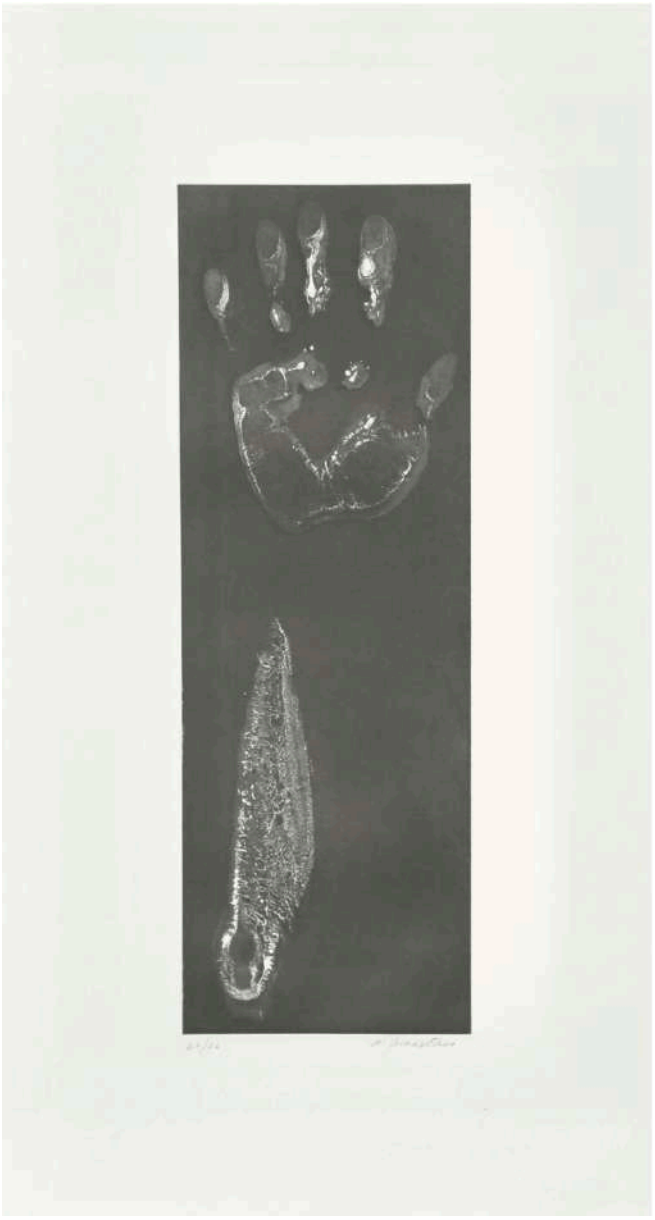
DONALD DUCK, (BLUE VERSION) 1998 - Photogravure, 49x39 cm, edition 26

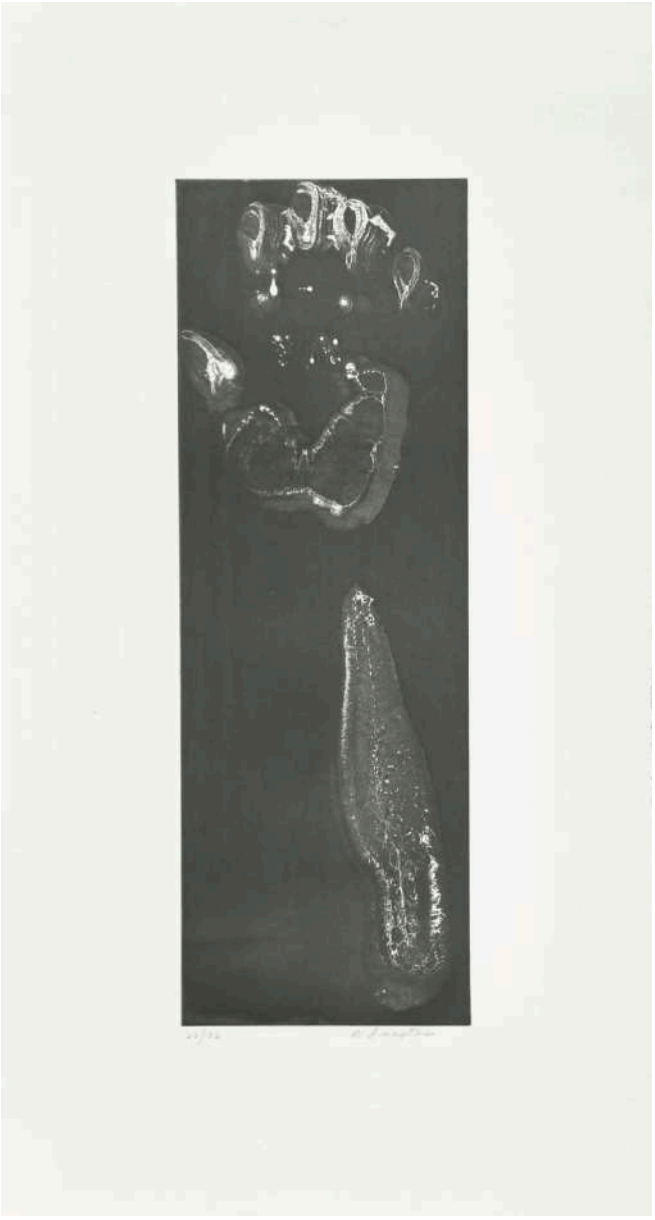
DONALD DUCK, 2013 - Photogravure, 68x57 cm, edition 26

DONALD DUCK, 2013 - Photogravure, 68x57 cm, edition 26

Body-Based Works

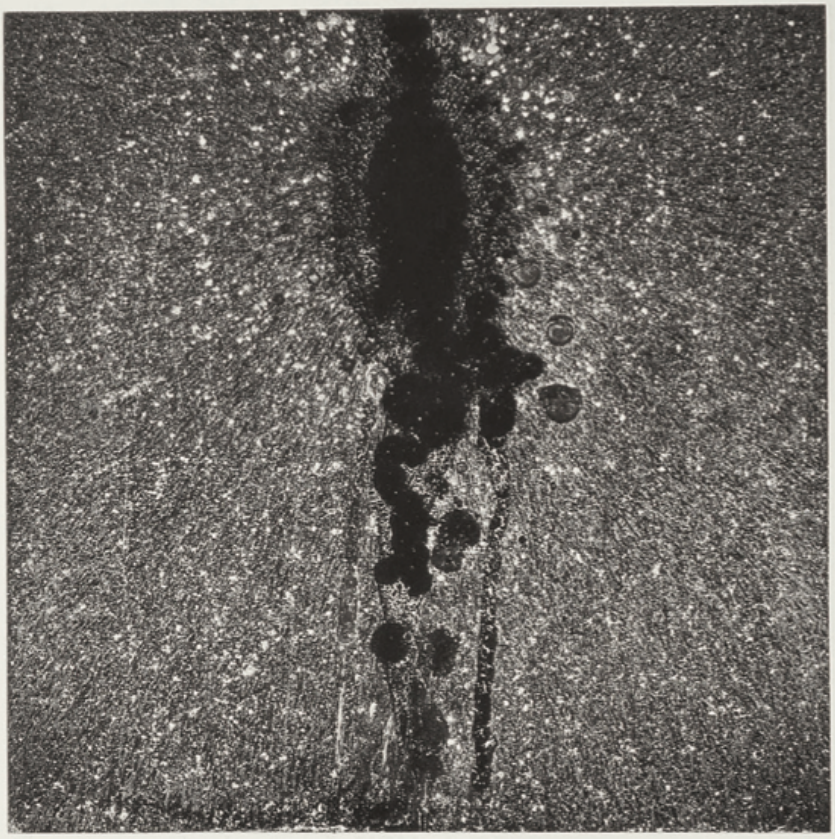
WITHOUT TITLE, 2000 - Soap ground aquatint, 57x50 cm, edition 26



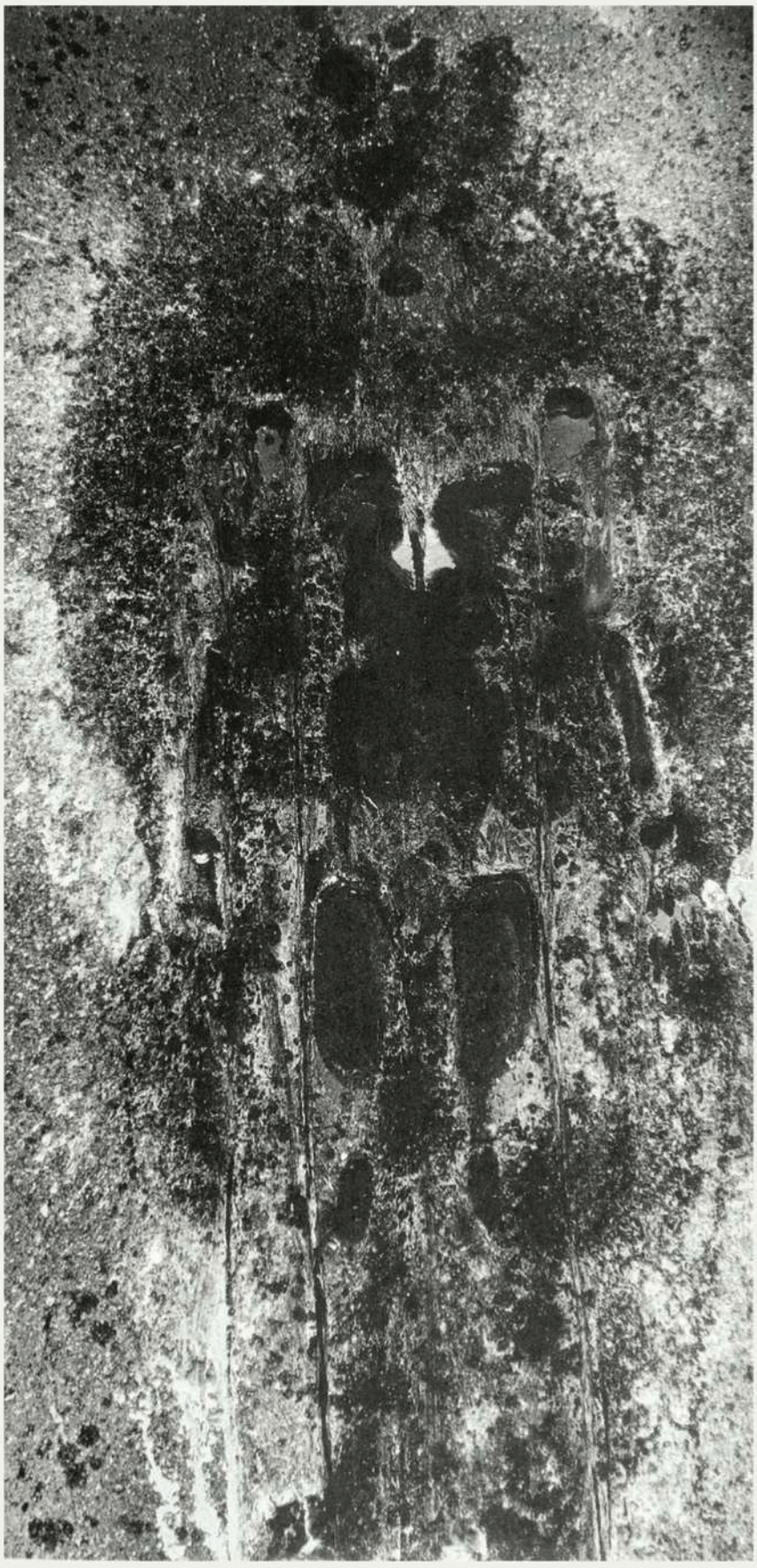


WITHOUT TITLE 1-2, 2000 - Soap ground aquatint, 72x39 cm, edition 26

RELIEF, 1998 - Aquatint, 60x58 cm, edition 26

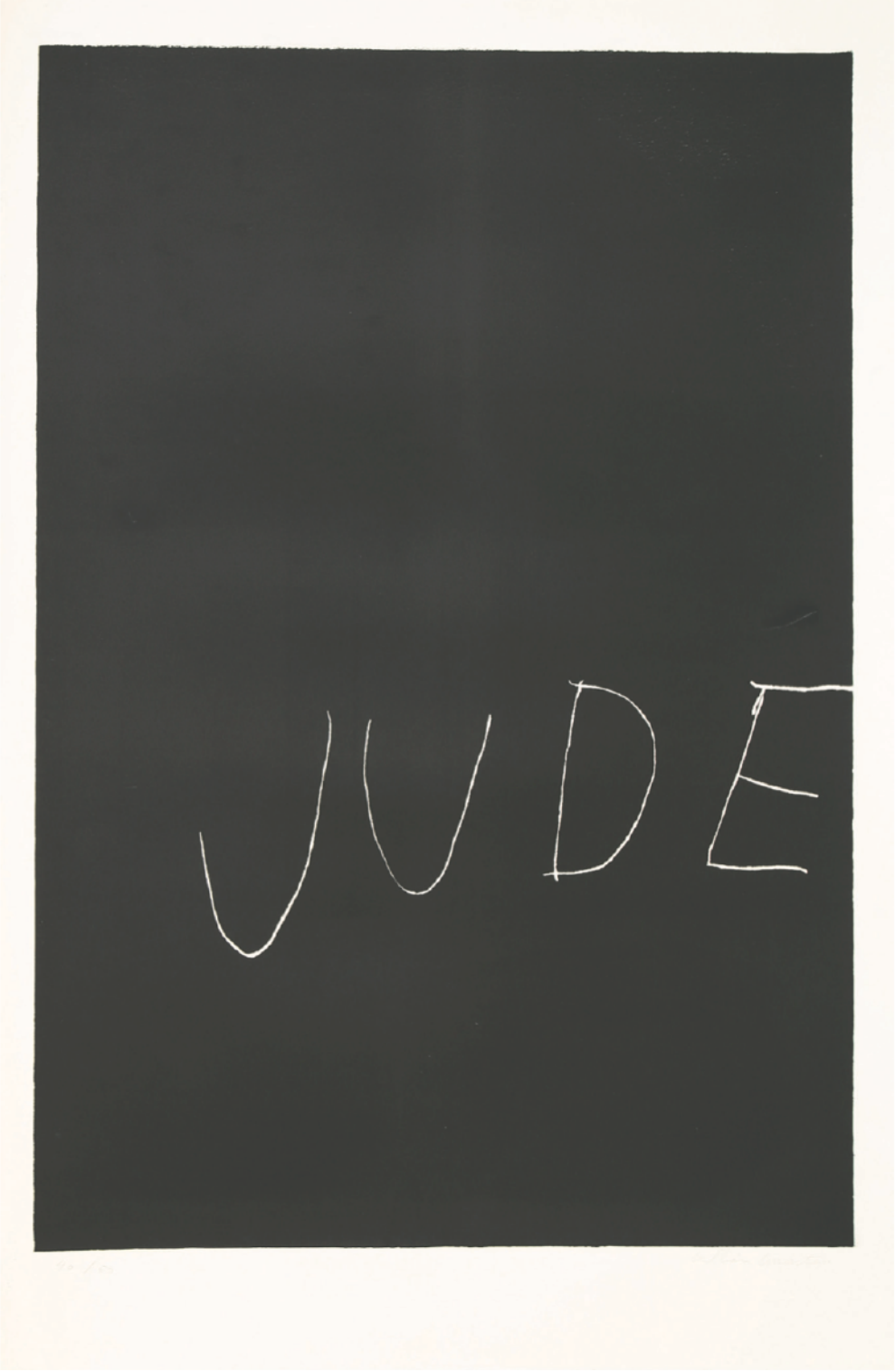


RELIEF, 1998 - Aquatint, 60x58 cm, edition 26

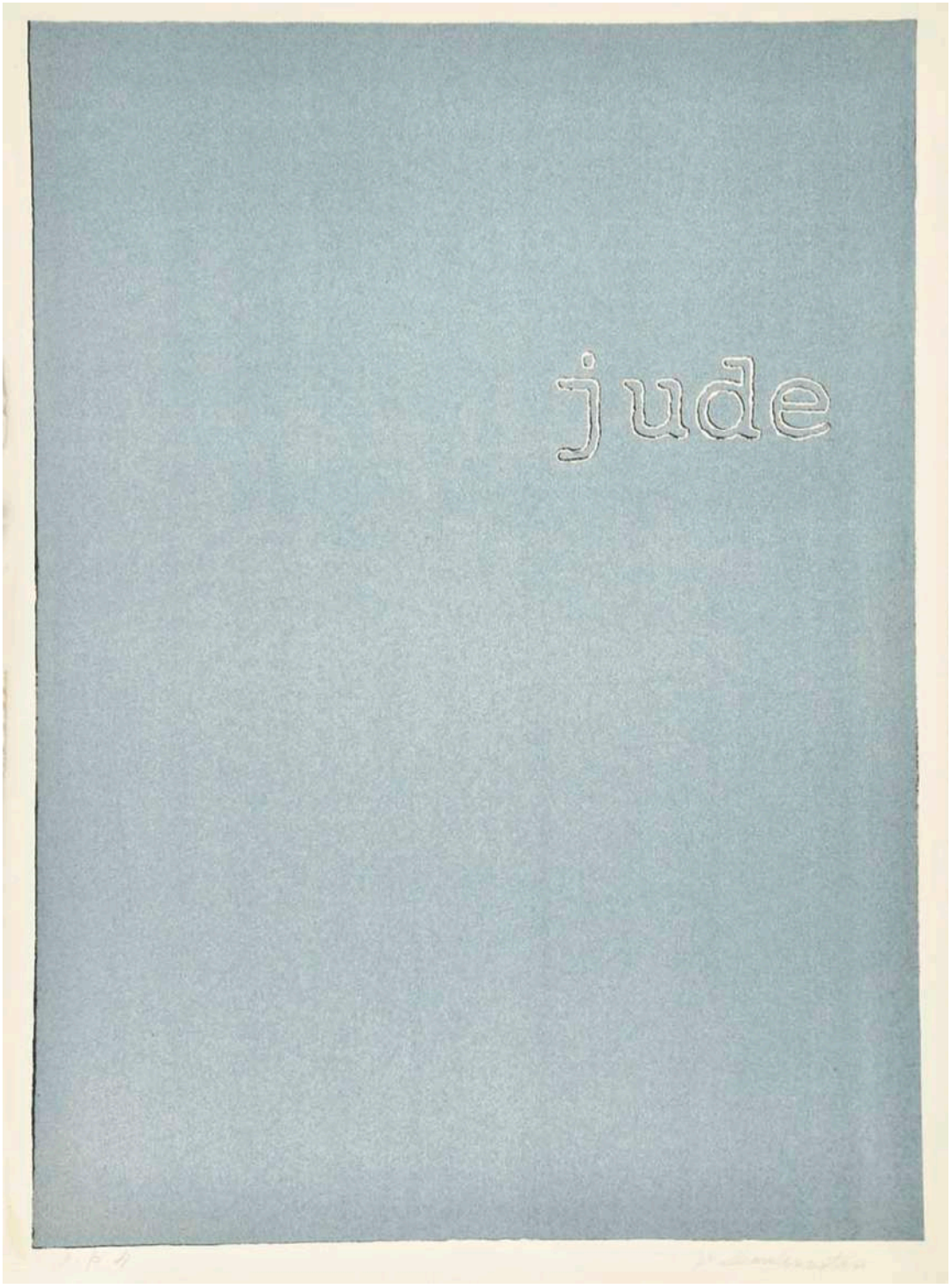


WITHOUT TITLE, 2000 - Aquatint, 200x97 cm, edition 9

Lithographs



JUDE, 1988 - Original Lithograph, 112x76 cm, edition 50



JUDE, 1988 - Original Lithograph, 77x56 cm, edition 80

BABABABAD, 1988 - Original Lithograph, 76x112 cm, edition 50

BABABABAD, 1988 - Original Lithograph, 76x112 cm, edition 50

BABABABAD, 1988 - Original Lithograph, 76x112 cm, edition 50

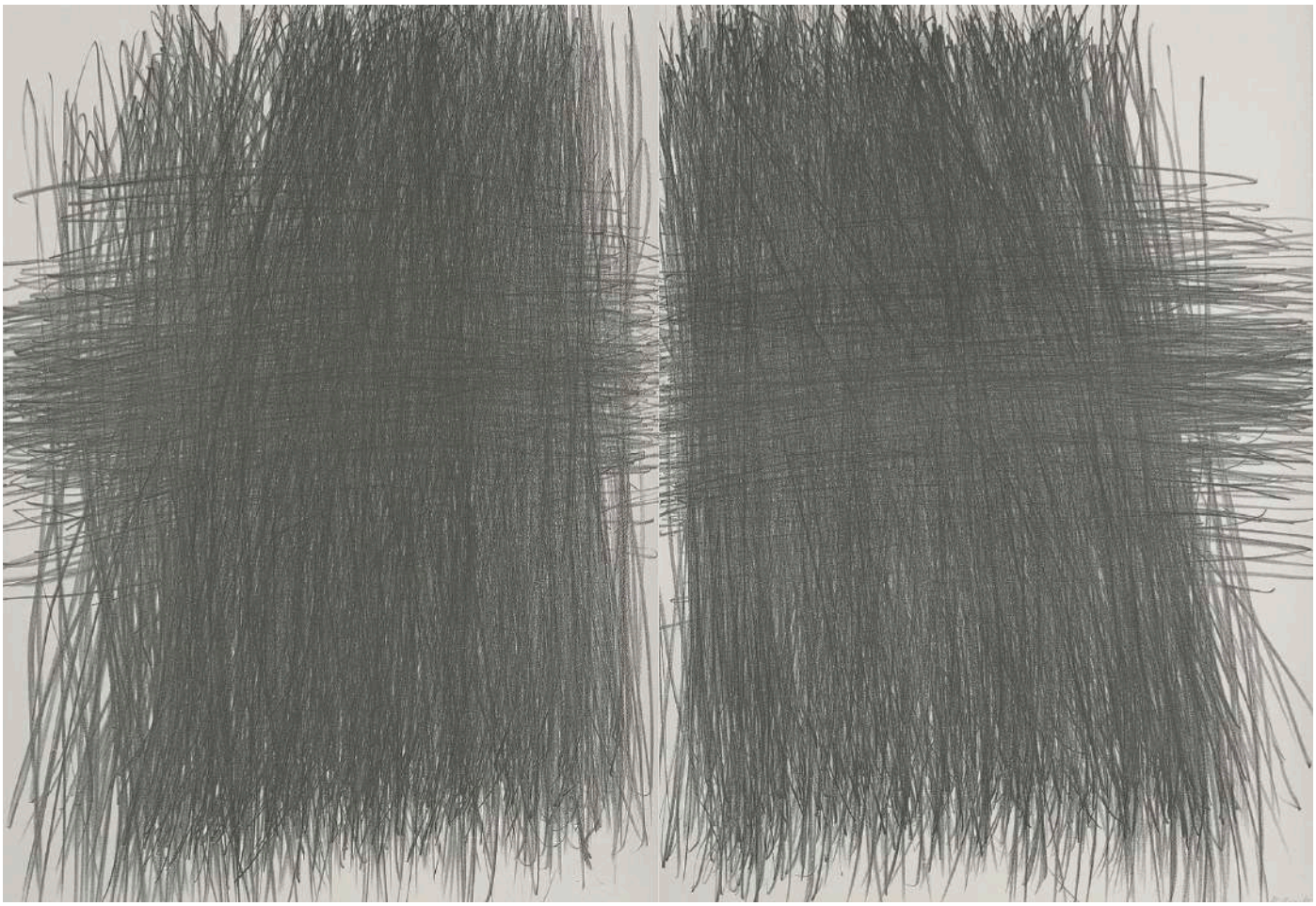
BABABABAD, 1988 - Original Lithograph, 76x112 cm, edition 9

BABABABAD, 1988 - Original Lithograph, 76x112 cm, edition 9

BABABABAD, 1988 - Original Lithograph, 76x112 cm, edition 9

BABABABAD, 1988 - Original Lithograph, 76x112 cm, edition 9

BABABABAD, 1988 - Original Lithograph, 76x112 cm, edition 9



BLIND DRAWING, 32 MINUTES, 2000 - Original Lithograph, 76x112 cm, edition 60

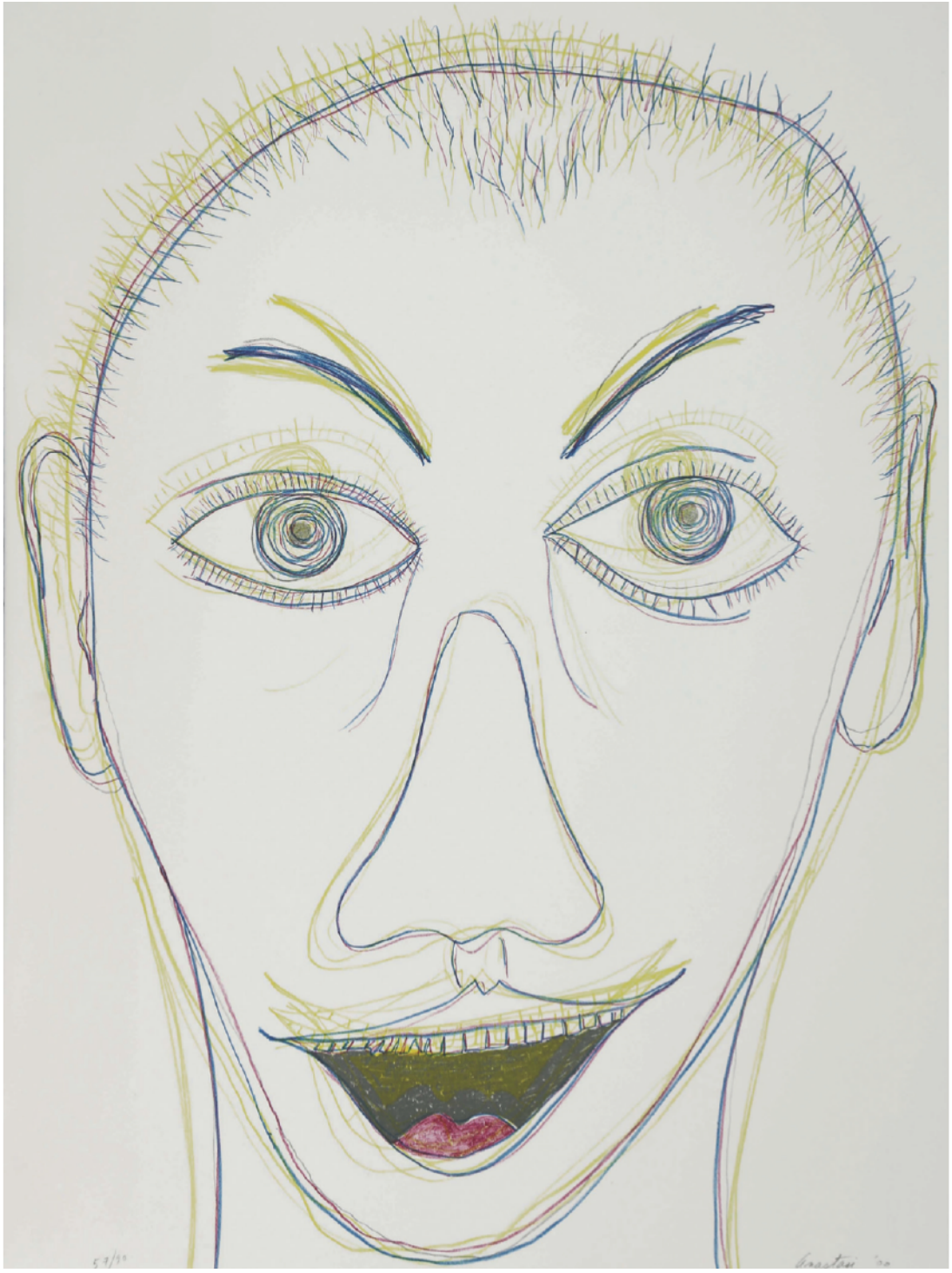
BLIND DRAWING, 1988 - Original Lithograph, 76x56 cm, edition 60

I OWN WAR, 1999 - Original Lithograph, 76x56 cm, edition 60

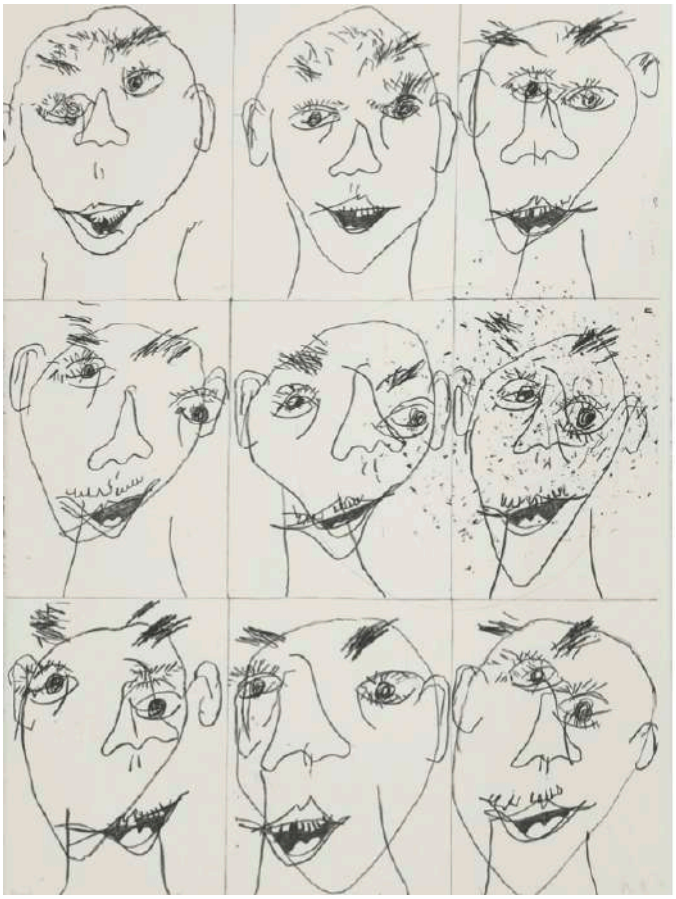
I OWN WAR, 1999 - Original Lithograph, 76x56 cm, edition 60

I OWN WAR, 1999 - Original Lithograph, 76x56 cm, edition 60

UNTITLED, 2005 - Original Lithograph, 56x76 cm, edition 90



HUNGRY GHOST, 2005 - Original Lithograph, 76x112 cm, edition 90



HUNGRY GHOST, 2005 - Original Lithograph, 76x56 cm, edition 48

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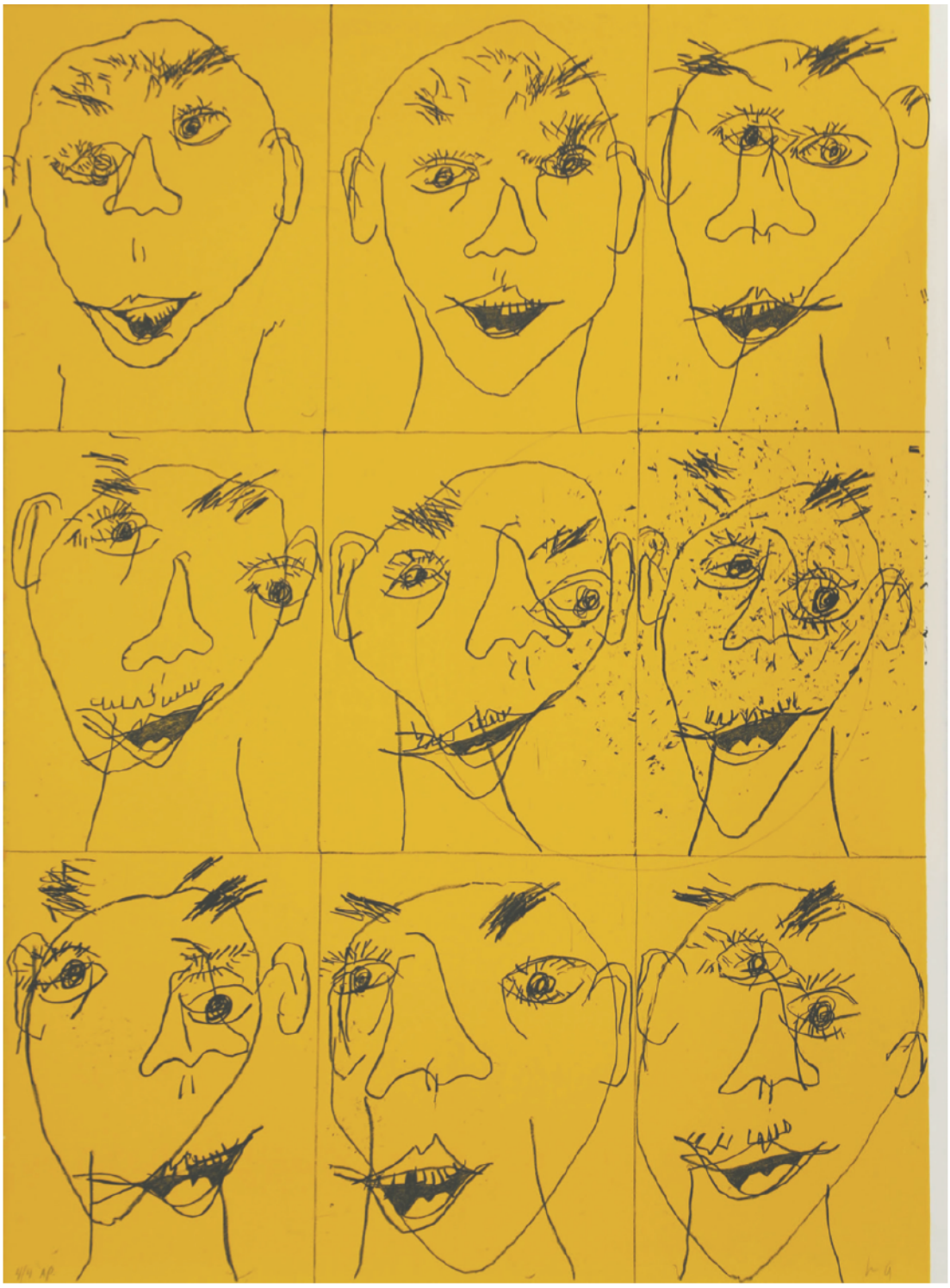

HUNGRY GHOST, 2005 - Original Lithograph, 76x56 cm, edition 48

NIELS BORCH JENSEN AND WILLIAM ANASTASI, 2000, Photo Sam Jedig

BORCH

By Niels Borch Jensen

In 1998 Sam Jedig, the owner of Stalke Galleri, asked me if he could reserve some time in the printshop for William Anastasi, when he came to Copenhagen later in the year for a show in the gallery. I was not familiar with Anastasi's work, but I said yes anyway, because Sam generally shows interesting artists.

When the time came and he arrived at the printshop, we spent most of the first day discussing his ideas. It soon became clear to me that this was not going to be like any other collaboration I had been involved in.

He basically wanted to do two types of prints. The first was technically very simple to make for the printshop, but it lay clearly outside the modern concept of an "original print" as an artwork, that is made using a printing process and only exists as a print.
He wanted to make a series of photogravures from photos of his installation works from the sixties and seventies. Doing that would in printmaking terms make the resulting editions "reproductive prints", something very much frowned upon by print professionals. I found it quite fitting for somebody who had spent his life doing art without engaging in any kind of traditional artistic praxis and avoiding aesthetic decisions, so we did quite a few of them.
The second type was more challenging for me. He showed me photocopies of some of his word-based works and photographs of some of his performance pieces and asked me to think of in-teresting ways of turning them into classical etchings. We had to stay true to his principles that the works had to be executed without any aesthetic decisions or calculated artistic gestures from him. We started with a photocopy of the work PERFECT. I transferred the toner from the paper to a blank copperplate by rubbing the backside with an acetone, so we had the word reversed and stuck to the plates polished surface. His task was to chip off every dot of toner with a sharp drypoint. In the process the point made minute scratches in the plate where the toner had been, so by removing the toner he had made a PERFECT drypoint as collateral damage. He made other versions of PERFECT, some in drypoint, some in aquatint.

My personal favorite is the one made with spit-bite aquatint, where we rigged a small bottle of acid on top of a stepladder with a device that allowed it to drip slowly onto the plate on the floor. The plate was lined up with the device so the acid hit the center, where I had transferred PERFECT from a photocopy. It created a small pool there and each new drop sent fine splashes all over the plate, creating a regular pattern of drops that was very dense near the center and faded gradually towards the edges of the plate. The toner from the photocopy protected the plate against the acid, leaving the word PERFECT untouched while the rest of the plate was etched more and more with each falling drop. In the middle of the process the device clogged up and the dripping stopped. I gave it a little nudged, which resulted in two off center blobs of acid and I thought I had ruined the plate; but much to my surprise Bill was very excited and explained that these unplanned "events" made the print even more PERFECT.

We both had a lot of fun and produced about twenty prints during that first week and the process had sparked ideas for manymore that we just did not have enough time to make.

Our collaboration continued for more than a decade with Bill spending about a week at the printshop every time he came to Copenhagen. We would pick up where we left, with him coming up with new ideas or asking for ways to make old ones into prints. It was one of the most productive collaborations I have had. Together we made a little less than a hundred prints, many in modest sizes, but some very spectacular full-body-scale ones, too.

The first one of these I am particularly proud of, because it represented a seemingly impossible challenge, that I after a lot of thinking and experimenting finally met with a simple answer.

Bill showed me a picture of his work RELIEF and asked me to think of a way to make an etching in that way. RELIEF was a flagstone size concrete relief he had made by pissing into a still wet concrete square. The piss had washed out a groove in a shape not unlike a vagina in the wet concrete, much like it would have done in snow, but the act was preserved for eternity when the concrete had set. The problem was that piss does not do very much to a metal plate other than corroding it over time. This is what Warhol used very effectively in his Oxidation paintings in the late seventies, but it would never produce the clear and dramatic shape, Anastasi had achieved with RELIEF, in a printable way. To get that I would have to get the mark from the piss fixed on the plate in a way that would allow me to etch it to a deep black. For that I needed an aquatint on the plate and some kind of resist that could be pissed away in a precise shape. I tried all the water-based resists I could think of, but none of them worked. They either came off too much or not enough.

I had pretty much given up, when I had the idea of using the aquatint powder as a resist. I put a normal aquatint that, could be etched to a deep black, on a plate and melted it to fix it on the plate. Then I put a very thick layer of aquatint powder on the plate and asked Bill to piss on it before I melted it. I etched the plate and proofed it. The print was spectacular, the mark was deep black and very precise and the rest of the plate was like a firework.

We immediately went on to make a 2 x 1 m self-portrait in the same way, except used ten cups of water.

I still believe that print is one of the best ones I have made.

Niels Borch Jensen and William Anastasi, Photo Sam Jedig